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MEN, WOMEN, AND BOOKS

BY

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL
AUTHOR OF 'OBITER DICTA,' ETC.

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DEAN SWIFT.

OF writing books about Dean Swift there is no end. I make no complaint, because I find no fault; I express no wonder, for I feel none. The subject is, and must always remain, one of strange fascination. We have no author like the Dean of St. Patrick's. It has been said of Wordsworth that good-luck usually attended those who have written about him. The same thing may be said, with at least equal truth, about Swift. There are a great many books about him, and with few exceptions they are all interesting.

A man who has had his tale told

both by Johnson and by Scott ought to be comprehensible. Swift has been, on the whole, lucky with his more recent biographers. Dr. Craik's is a judicious life, Mitford's an admirable sketch, Forster's a valuable fragment; Mr. Leslie Stephen never fails to get to close quarters with his subject. Then there are anecdotes without end—all bubbling with vitality—letters, and journals. And yet, when you have read all that is to be read, what are you to say—what to think?

No fouler pen than Swift's has soiled our literature. His language is horrible from first to last. He is full of odious images, of base and abominable allusions. It would be a labour of Hercules to cleanse his pages. His love-letters are defaced by his incurable coarseness. This habit of his is so inveterate that it seems a miracle he kept his sermons

free from his blackguard phrases. It is a question not of morality, but of decency, whether it is becoming to sit in the same room with the works of this divine. How the good Sir Walter ever managed to see him through the press is amazing. In this matter Swift is inexcusable.

Then his unfeeling temper, his domineering brutality—the tears he drew, the discomfort he occasioned.

'Swift, dining at a house, where the part of the tablecloth which was next him happened to have a small hole, tore it as wide as he could, and ate his soup through it; his reason for such behaviour was, as he said, to mortify the lady of the house, and to teach her to pay a proper attention to housewifery.'

One is glad to know he sometimes met his match. He slept one night at an inn kept by a widow lady of

very respectable family, Mrs. Seneca, of Drogheda. In the morning he made a violent complaint of the sheets being dirty.

'Dirty, indeed!' exclaimed Mrs. Seneca; 'you are the last man, doctor, that should complain of dirty sheets.'

And so, indeed, he was, for he had just published the 'Lady's Dressing-room,' a very dirty sheet indeed.

Honour to Mrs. Seneca, of Drogheda!

This side of the account needs no vouching; but there is another side.

In 1705 Addison made a present of his book of travels to Dr. Swift, in the blank leaf of which he wrote the following words:

'To Dr. Jonathan Swift,
The most agreeable companion,
The truest friend,
And the greatest genius of his age.'

Addison was not lavish of epithets. His geese, Ambrose Philips excepted,

were geese, not swans. His testimony is not to be shaken—and what a testimony it is!

Then there is Stella's Swift. As for Stella herself, I have never felt I knew enough about her to join very heartily in Thackeray's raptures: 'Who has not in his mind an image of Stella? Who does not love her? Fair and tender creature! Pure and affectionate heart. . . . Gentle lady! so lovely, so loving, so unhappy. . . . You are one of the saints of English story.' This may be so, but all I feel I know about Stella is, that Swift loved her. That is certain, at all events.

> 'If this be error, and upon me proved,
> I never writ, and no man ever loved.'

The verses to Stella are altogether lovely:

> 'But, Stella, say what evil tongue
> Reports you are no longer young,
> That Time sits with his scythe to mow
> Where erst sat Cupid with his bow,

That half your locks are turned to gray
I'll ne'er believe a word they say.
'Tis true, but let it not be known,
My eyes are somewhat dimmish grown.'

And again:

'Oh! then, whatever Heaven intends,
Take pity on your pitying friends!
Nor let your ills affect your mind
To fancy they can be unkind.
Me, surely me, you ought to spare
Who gladly would your suffering share,
Or give my scrap of life to you
And think it far beneath your due;
You, to whose care so oft I owe
That I'm alive to tell you so.'

We are all strangely woven in one piece, as Shakespeare says. These verses of Swift irresistibly remind their readers of Cowper's lines to Mrs. Unwin.

Swift's prose is famous all the world over. To say anything about it is superfluous. David Hume indeed found fault with it. Hume paid great attention to the English language, and by the time he died had come to write it with much facility and creditable accuracy; but Swift

is one of the masters of English prose. But how admirable also is his poetry—easy, yet never slipshod! It lacks one quality only—imagination. There is not a fine phrase, a magical line to be found in it, such as may occasionally be found in—let us say—Butler. Yet, as a whole, Swift is a far more enjoyable poet than Butler.

Swift has unhappily written some abominable verses, which ought never to have been set up in type; but the 'Legion Club,' the verses on his own death, 'Cadenus and Vanessa,' the 'Rhapsody on Poetry,' the tremendous lines on the 'Day of Judgment, and many others, all belong to enjoyable poetry, and can never lose their freshness, their charm, their vitality. Amongst the poets of the eighteenth century Swift sits secure, for he can never go out of fashion.

His hatred of mankind seems

genuine; there is nothing *falsetto* about it. He is always in sober, deadly earnest when he abuses his fellow-men. What an odd revenge we have taken! His gospel of hatred, his testament of woe—his 'Gulliver,' upon which he expended the treasures of his wit, and into which he instilled the concentrated essence of his rage—has become a child's book, and has been read with wonder and delight by generations of innocents. After all, it is a kindly place, this planet, and the best use we have for our cynics is to let them amuse the junior portion of our population.

I only know one good-humoured anecdote of Swift; it is very slight, but it is fair to tell it. He dined one day in the company of the Lord Keeper, his son, and their two ladies, with Mr. Cæsar, Treasurer of the Navy, at his house in the City. They happened to talk of Brutus, and

Swift said something in his praise, and then, as it were, suddenly recollecting himself, said:

'Mr. Cæsar, I beg your pardon.'

One can fancy this occasioning a pleasant ripple of laughter.

There is another story I cannot lay my hands on to verify, but it is to this effect: Faulkner, Swift's Dublin publisher, years after the Dean's death, was dining with some friends, who rallied him upon his odd way of eating some dish—I think, asparagus. He confessed Swift had told him it was the right way; therefore, they laughed the louder, until Faulkner, growing a little angry, exclaimed:

'I tell you what it is, gentlemen: if you had ever dined with the Dean, you would have eaten your asparagus as he bade you.'

Truly a wonderful man—imperious, masterful. Yet his state is not kingly

like Johnson's — it is tyrannical, sinister, forbidding.

Nobody has brought out more effectively than Mr. Churton Collins* Swift's almost ceaseless literary activity. To turn over Scott's nineteen volumes is to get some notion of it. It is not a pleasant task, for Swift was an unclean spirit; but he fascinates and makes the reader long to peep behind the veil, and penetrate the secret of this horrible, yet loveable, because beloved, man. Mr. Collins is rather short with this longing on the part of the reader. He does not believe in any secret; he would have us believe that it is all as plain as a pikestaff. Swift was never mad, and was never married. Stella was a well-regulated damsel, who, though she would have liked very much to have been Mrs. Dean, soon recog-

* 'Jonathan Swift,' by J. Churton Collins: Chatto & Windus, 1893.

nised that her friend was not a marrying man, and was, therefore, well content for the rest of her days to share his society with Mrs. Dingley. Vanessa was an ill-regulated damsel, who had not the wit to see that her lover was not a marrying man, and, in the most vulgar fashion possible, thrust herself most inconveniently upon his notice, received a snubbing, took to drink, and died of the spleen. As for the notion that Swift died mad, Mr. Collins conceives himself to get rid of that by reprinting a vague and most inconclusive letter of Dr. Bucknill's. The mystery and the misery of Swift's life have not been got rid of by Mr. Collins. He has left them where he found them—at large. He complains, perhaps justly, that Scott never took the trouble to form any clear impression of Swift's character. Yet we must say that we understand Sir

Walter's Swift better than we do Mr. Collins'. Whether the Dean married Stella can never be known. For our part, we think he did not; but to assert positively that no marriage took place, as Mr. Collins does, is to carry dogmatism too far.

A good deal of fault has lately been found with Thackeray's lecture on Swift. We still think it both delightful and just. The rhapsody about Stella, as I have already hinted, is not to our mind. Rhapsodies about real women are usually out of place. Stella was no saint, but a quick-witted, sharp-tongued hussy, whose fate it was to win the love and pacify the soul of the greatest Englishman of his time—for to call Swift an Irishman is sheer folly. But, apart from this not unnatural slip, what, I wonder, is the matter with Thackeray's lecture, regarded, not as a storehouse of facts, or as an esti-

mate of Swift's writings, but as a sketch of character? Mr. Collins says quite as harsh things about Swift as are to be found in Thackeray's lecture, but he does not attempt, as Thackeray does, to throw a strong light upon this strange and moving figure. It is a hard thing to attempt —failure in such a case is almost inevitable; but I do not think Thackeray did fail. An ounce of mother-wit is often worth a pound of clergy. Insight is not always the child of study. But here, again, the matter should be brought to the test by each reader for himself. Read Thackeray's lecture once again.

What can be happier or truer than his comparison of Swift with a highwayman disappointed of his plunder?

'The great prize has not come yet. The coach with the mitre and crosier

in it, which he intends to have for his share, has been delayed on the way from St. James's. The mails wait until nightfall, when his runners come and tell him that the coach has taken a different road and escaped him. So he fires his pistols into the air with a curse, and rides away in his own country.'

Thackeray's criticism is severe, but is it not just? Are we to stand by and hear our nature libelled, and our purest affections beslimed, without a word of protest? 'I think I would rather have had a potato and a friendly word from Goldsmith than have been beholden to the Dean for a guinea and a dinner.' So would I. But no one of the Dean's numerous critics was more keenly alive than Thackeray to the majesty and splendour of Swift's genius, and to his occasional flashes

of tenderness and love. That amazing person, Lord Jeffrey, in one of his too numerous contributions to the *Edinburgh Review*, wrote of the poverty of Swift's style. Lord Jeffrey was, we hope, a professional critic, not an amateur.

LORD BOLINGBROKE.

THE most accomplished of all our political rascals, Lord Bolingbroke, who once, if the author of 'Animated Nature' is to be believed, ran naked through the Park, has, in his otherwise pinchbeck 'Reflections in Exile,' one quaint fancy. He suggests that the exile, instead of mourning the deprivation of the society of his friends, should take a pencil (the passage is not before me) and make a list of his acquaintances, and then ask himself which of the number he wants to see at the moment. It is, no doubt, always wise to be particular. Delusion as well as fraud loves to lurk in generalities.

As for this Bolingbroke himself, that he was a consummate scoundrel is now universally admitted; but his mental qualifications, though great, still excite differences of opinion. Even those who are comforted by his style and soothed by the rise and fall of his sentences, are fain to admit that had his classic head been severed from his shoulders a rogue would have met with his deserts. He has been long since stripped of all his fine pretences, and, morally speaking, runs as naked through the pages of history as erst he did (according to Goldsmith) across Hyde Park.

That Bolingbroke had it in him to have been a great Parliamentarian is certain. He knew 'the nature of that assembly,' and that 'they grow, like hounds, fond of the man who shows them sport, and by whose halloo they are used to be encouraged.' Like the rascally lawyer in 'Guy

Mannering,' Mr. Gilbert Glossin, he could do a good piece of work when so minded. But he was seldom so minded, and consequently he failed to come up to the easy standard of his day, and thus brought it about that by his side Sir Robert Walpole appears in the wings and aspect of an angel.

St. John has now nothing to wear but his wit and his style; these still find admirers amongst the judicious.

Mr. Churton Collins, who has written a delightful book about Bolingbroke, and also about Voltaire in England, has a great notion of Bolingbroke's literary merits, and extols them with ardour. He is not likely to be wrong, but, none the less, it is lawful to surround yourself with the seven stately quartos which contain Bolingbroke's works and letters, and ask yourself whether Mr. Collins is right.

Of all Lord Bolingbroke's published

writings, none is better than his celebrated Letter to Wyndham, recounting his adventures in France, whither he betook himself hastily after Queen Anne's death, and where he joined the Pretender. Here he is not philosophizing, but telling a tale, varnished it may be, but sparkling with malice, wit, and humour. Well may Mr. Collins say, 'Walpole never produced a more amusing sketch than the picture of the Pretender's Court at Paris and of the Privy Council in the Bois de Boulogne'; but when he proceeds further and adds, 'Burke never produced anything nobler than the passage which commences with the words "The ocean which environs us is an emblem of our government,"' I am glad to ejaculate, 'Indeed he did!'

Here is the passage:

'The ocean which environs us is

an emblem of our government, and the pilot and the Minister are in similar circumstances. It seldom happens that either of them can steer a direct course, and they both arrive at their ports by means which frequently seem to carry them from it. But, as the work advances, the conduct of him who leads it on with real abilities clears up, the appearing inconsistencies are reconciled, and, when it is once consummated, the whole shows itself so uniform, so plain, and so natural, that every dabbler in politics will be apt to think he could have done the same. But, on the other hand, a man who proposes no such object, who substitutes artifice in the place of ability, who, instead of leading parties and governing accidents, is eternally agitated backwards and forwards, who begins every day something new and carries nothing on to perfection, may

impose a while on the world, but, a little sooner or later, the mystery will be revealed, and nothing will be found to be couched under it but a thread of pitiful expedients, the ultimate end of which never extended farther than living from day to day.'

A fine passage, most undoubtedly, and an excellent homily for Ministers. No one but a dabbler in literature will be apt to think he could have done the same—but noble with the nobility of Burke? A noble passage ought to do more for a reader than compel his admiration or win his assent; it should leave him a little better than it found him, with a warmer heart and a more elevated mind.

Mr. Collins also refers with delight to a dissertation on Eloquence, to be found in the 'Letter on the Spirit of Patriotism,' and again expresses a

doubt whether it would be possible to select anything finer from the pages of Burke.

The passage is too long to be quoted; it begins thus:

'Eloquence has charms to lead mankind, and gives a nobler superiority than power that every dunce may use, or fraud that every knave may employ.'

And then follows a good deal about Demosthenes and Cicero, and other talkers of old time.

This may or may not be a fine passage; but if we allow it to be the former, we cannot admit that as it flows it fertilizes.

Bolingbroke and Chesterfield are two of the remarkable figures of the first half of the last century. They are both commonly called 'great,' to distinguish them from other holders of the same titles. Their accomplishments were as endless as their oppor-

tunities. They were the most eloquent men of their time, and both possessed that insight into things, that distinction of mind, we call genius. They were ready writers, and have left 'works' behind them full of wit and gracious expressions; but neither the one nor the other has succeeded in lodging himself in the general memory. The ill-luck which drove them out of politics has pursued them down the path of letters, though the frequenters of that pleasant track are wisely indifferent to the characters of dead authors who still give pleasure.

No shrewder men ever sat upon a throne than the first two Georges, monarchs of this realm. The second George hated Chesterfield, and called him 'a tea-table scoundrel.' The phrase sticks. There *is* something petty about this great Lord Chesterfield. The first George, though wholly illiterate, yet took it upon himself

to despise Bolingbroke, philosopher though he was, and dismissed an elaborate effusion of his as '*bagatelles*.' Here again the phrase sticks, and not even the beautiful type and lordly margins of Mallet's edition of Lord Bolingbroke's writings, or the stately periods of that nobleman himself, can drive the royal verdict out of my ears. There is nothing real about these writings save their colossal impudence, as when, for example, in his letter on the State of Parties on the accession of George I., he solemnly denies that there was any design during the four last years of Queen Anne's reign to set aside the Hanover succession, and, in support of his denial, quotes himself as a man who, if there had been anything of the sort, must have known of it. By the side of this man the perfidy of Thurlow or of Wedderburn shows white as wool.

By the aid of his own wits and a cunning wife, and assisted by the growing hatred of corruption, Bolingbroke, towards the close of his long life, nearly succeeded in securing some measure of oblivion of his double-dyed treachery. He managed to inflame the 'Young England' of the period with his picture of a 'Patriot King,' and if he had only put into the fire his lucubrations about Christianity he might have accomplished his exit from a world he had made worse for seventy-five years with a show of decency. But he did not do so; the 'cur Mallet' was soon ready with his volumes, and then the memory of Bolingbroke was exposed to the obloquy which in this country is (or was) the heritage of the heterodox.

Horace Walpole, who hated Bolingbroke, as he was in special duty bound to do, felt this keenly.

He was glad Bolingbroke was gibbeted, but regretted that he should swing on a wrong count in the indictment.

Writing to Sir Horace Mann, Walpole says:

'You say you have made my Lord Cork give up my Lord Bolingbroke. It is comical to see how he is given up here since the best of his writings, his metaphysical divinity, has been published. While he betrayed and abused every man who trusted him, or who had forgiven him, or to whom he was obliged, he was a hero, a patriot, a philosopher, and the greatest genius of the age; the moment his "Craftsmen" against Moses and St. Paul are published we have discovered he was the worst man and the worst writer in the world. The grand jury have presented his works, and as long as there are any parsons he will be ranked with Tindal

and Toland—nay, I don't know whether my father won't become a rubric martyr for having been persecuted by him.'

My sympathies are with Walpole, although, when he pronounces Bolingbroke's metaphysical divinity to be the best of his writings, I cannot agree.

Mr. Collins' book is a most excellent one, and if anyone reads it because of my recommendation he will owe me thanks. Mr. Collins values Pope not merely for his poetry, but for his philosophy also, which he cadged from Bolingbroke. The 'Essay on Man' is certainly better reading than anything Bolingbroke ever wrote—though what may be the value of its philosophy is a question which may well stand over till after the next General Election, or even longer.

STERNE.

NO less pious a railway director than Sir Edward Watkin once prefaced an oration to the shareholders of one of his numerous undertakings by expressing, in broken accents, the wish that 'He who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb might deal gently with illustrious personages in their present grievous affliction.' The wish was a kind one, and is only referred to here as an illustration of the amazing skill of the author of the phrase quoted in so catching the tone, temper, and style of King James's version, that the words occur to the feeling mind as

naturally as any in Holy Writ as the best expression of a sorrowful emotion.

The phrase itself is, indeed, an excellent example of Sterne's genius for pathos. No one knew better than he how to drive words home. George Herbert, in his selection of 'Outlandish Proverbs,' to which he subsequently gave the alternate title 'Jacula Prudentum,' has the following: 'To a close-shorn sheep God gives wind by measure'; but this proverb in that wording would never have succeeded in making the chairman of a railway company believe he had read it somewhere in the Bible. It is the same thought, but the words which convey it stop far short of the heart. A close-shorn sheep will not brook comparison with Sterne's 'shorn lamb'; whilst the tender, compassionate, beneficent 'God tempers the wind' makes

the original 'God gives wind by measure' wear the harsh aspect of a wholly unnecessary infliction.

Sterne is our best example of the plagiarist whom none dare make ashamed. He robbed other men's orchards with both hands; and yet no more original writer than he ever went to press in these isles.

He has been dogged, of course; but, as was befitting in his case, it has been done pleasantly. Sterne's detective was the excellent Dr. Ferriar, of Manchester, whose 'Illustrations of Sterne,' first published in 1798, were written at an earlier date for the edification of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. Those were pleasant days, when men of reading were content to give their best thoughts first to their friends and then—ten years afterwards—to the public.

Dr. Ferriar's book is worthy of its subject. The motto on the title-page is delightfully chosen. It is taken from the opening paragraph of Lord Shaftesbury's 'Miscellaneous Reflections': 'Peace be with the soul of that charitable and Courteous Author who for the common benefit of his fellow-Authors introduced the ingenious way of MISCELLANEOUS WRITING.' Here Dr. Ferriar stopped; but I will add the next sentence: 'It must be owned that since this happy method was established the Harvest of Wit has been more plentiful and the Labourers more in number than heretofore.' Wisely, indeed, did Charles Lamb declare Shaftesbury was not too genteel for him. No pleasanter penance for random thinking can be devised than spending an afternoon turning over Shaftesbury's three volumes and trying to discover how near he ever did come to saying

that 'Ridicule was the test of truth.'

Dr. Ferriar's happy motto puts the reader in a sweet temper to start with, for he sees at once that the author is no pedantic, soured churl, but a good fellow who is going to make a little sport with a celebrated wit, and show you how a genius fills his larder.

The first thing that strikes you in reading Dr. Ferriar's book is the marvellous skill with which Sterne has created his own atmosphere and characters, in spite of the fact that some of the most characteristic remarks of his characters are, in the language of the Old Bailey, 'stolen goods.' '"There is no cause but one," replied my Uncle Toby, "why one man's nose is longer than another's, but because God pleases to have it so." "That is Grangousier's solution," said my father.

"'Tis he," continued my Uncle Toby, looking up and not regarding my father's interruption, "who makes us all, and frames and puts us together in such forms and proportions and for such ends as is agreeable to His infinite wisdom."'

'"Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh"; and if those are not the words of my Uncle Toby, it is idle to believe in anything': and yet we read in Rabelais—as, indeed, Sterne suggests to us we should—'"Pourquoi," dit Gargantua, "est-ce que frère Jean a si beau nez?" "Parce," répondit Grangousier, "qu'ainsi Dieu l'a voulu, lequel nous fait en telle forme et à telle fin selon son divin arbitre, que fait un potier ses vaisseaux."'

To create a character and to be able to put in his mouth borrowed words which yet shall quiver with his personality is the supreme

triumph of the greatest 'miscellaneous writer' who ever lived.

Dr. Ferriar's book, after all, but establishes this: that the only author whom Sterne really pillaged is Burton, of the 'Anatomy of Melancholy,' a now well-known writer, but who in Sterne's time, despite Dr. Johnson's partiality, appears to have been neglected. Sir Walter Scott, an excellent authority on such a point, says, in his 'Life of Sterne,' that Dr. Ferriar's essay raised the '"Anatomy of Melancholy" to double price in the book market.'

Sir Walter is unusually hard upon Sterne in this matter of the 'Anatomy.' But different men, different methods. Sir Walter had his own way of cribbing. Sterne's humorous conception of the character of the elder Shandy required copious illustration from learned sources, and a whole host of examples

and whimsicalities, which it would have passed the wit of man to invent for himself. He found these things to his hand in Burton, and, like our first parent, 'he scrupled not to eat.' It is not easy to exaggerate the extent of his plunder. The well-known chapter with its refrain, 'The Lady Baussière rode on,' and the chapter on the death of Brother Bobby, are almost, though not altogether, pure Burton.

The general effect of it all is to raise your opinion immensely—of Burton. As for your opinion of Sterne as a man of conduct, is it worth while having one? It is a poor business bludgeoning men who bore the brunt of life a long century ago, and whose sole concern now with the world is to delight it. Laurence Sterne is not standing for Parliament. 'Eliza' has been dead a dozen decades. Nobody covers

his sins under the cloak of this particular parson. Our sole business is with 'Tristram Shandy' and 'The Sentimental Journey'; and if these books are not matters for congratulation and joy, then the pleasures of literature are all fudge, and the whole thing a got-up job of 'The Trade' and the hungry crew who go buzzing about it.

Mr. Traill concludes his pleasant 'Life of Sterne' in a gloomy vein, which I cannot for the life of me understand. He says: 'The fate of Richardson might seem to be close behind him' (Sterne). Even the fate of 'Clarissa' is no hard one. She still numbers good intellects, and bears her century lightly. Diderot, as Mr. Traill reminds us, praised her outrageously—but Mr. Ruskin is not far behind; and from Diderot to Ruskin is a good 'drive.' But 'Tristram' is a very

different thing from 'Clarissa.' I should have said, without hesitation, that it was one of the most popular books in the language. Go where you will amongst men—old and young, undergraduates at the Universities, readers in our great cities, old fellows in the country, judges, doctors, barristers—if they have any tincture of literature about them, they all know their 'Shandy' at least as well as their 'Pickwick.' What more can be expected? 'True Shandeism,' its author declares, 'think what you will against it, opens the heart and lungs.' I will be bound to say Sterne made more people laugh in 1893 than in any previous year; and, what is more, he will go on doing it—'"that is, if it please God," said my Uncle Toby.'

DR. JOHNSON.

DR. JOHNSON'S massive shade cannot complain of this generation. We are not all of us—or, indeed, many of us—much after his mind, but, for all that, we worship his memory. Editions of Boswell, old or new, are on every shelf; but more than this, there is a healthy and commendable disposition to recognise that great, surpassingly great, as are the merits of Boswell, still there is such a thing as a detached and separate Johnson.

It is a good thing every now and again to get rid of Boswell. It is a little ungrateful, but we have Johnson's authority for the statement that

DISCARDED

we hate our benefactors. After all, even had there been no Boswell, there would have been a Johnson. I will always stick to it that Hawkins's Life is a most readable book. Dr. Birkbeck Hill stands a good chance of being hated some day. We owed him a debt of gratitude already. He has lately added to it by publishing at the Clarendon Press, in two stately volumes, uniform with his great edition of the Life, the 'Letters of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.'

For a lazy man who loathed writing Dr. Johnson did not do badly —his letters to Mrs. Thrale exceed three hundred. It is not known that he ever wrote a letter to Burke. I cannot quite jump with the humour of Dr. Hill's comment on this fact. He observes: 'So far as we know, he did not write a single letter to Edward Burke—he wrote more than three hundred to the wife of a South-

wark brewer.' What has the beer got to do with it? and why drag in Southwark? Every man knows, without being told, why Johnson wrote three hundred letters to Mrs. Thrale; and as for his not writing to Burke, it is notorious that the Doctor never could be got to write to anybody for information.

Dr. Hill's two volumes are as delightful books as ever issued from the press. In them Dr. Johnson is to be seen in every aspect of his character, whilst a complete study may be made from them of the enormous versatility of his style. It is hard to say what one admires most—the ardour of his affection, the piety of his nature, the friendliness of his disposition, the playfulness of his humour, or his love of learning and of letters.

What strikes one perhaps most, if you assume a merely critical attitude,

is the glorious ease and aptitude of his quotations from ancient and modern writings. Of pedantry there is not a trace. Nothing is forced or dragged in. It is all, apparently, simply inevitable. You do not exclaim as you read, 'What a memory the fellow has!' but merely, 'How charming it all is!'

It is not difficult to construct from these two volumes alone the gospel —the familiar, the noble gospel according to Dr. Johnson. It reads somewhat as follows:

'Your father begot you and your mother bore you. Honour them both. Husbands, be faithful to your wives. Wives, forgive your husbands' unfaithfulness — once. No grown man who is dependent on the will, that is the whim, of another can be happy, and life without enjoyment is intolerable gloom. Therefore, as

money means independence and enjoyment, get money, and having got it keep it. A spendthrift is a fool.

'Clear your mind of cant and never debauch your understanding. The only liberty worth turning out into the street for, is the liberty to do what you like in your own house and to say what you like in your own inn. All work is bondage.

'Never get excited about causes you do not understand, or about people you have never seen. Keep Corsica out of your head.

'Life is a struggle with either poverty or ennui; but it is better to be rich than to be poor. Death is a terrible thing to face. The man who says he is not afraid of it lies. Yet, as murderers have met it bravely on the scaffold, when the time comes so perhaps may I. In the meantime I am horribly afraid. The future is

dark. I should like more evidence of the immortality of the soul.

'There is great solace in talk. We —you and I—are shipwrecked on a wave-swept rock. At any moment one or other of us, perhaps both, may be carried out to sea and lost. For the time being we have a modicum of light and warmth, of meat and drink. Let us constitute ourselves a club, stretch out our legs and talk. We have minds, memories, varied experiences, different opinions. Sir, let us talk, not as men who mock at fate, not with coarse speech or foul tongue, but with a manly mixture of the gloom that admits the inevitable, and the merriment that observes the incongruous. Thus talking we shall learn to love one another, not sentimentally but fundamentally.

'Cultivate your mind, if you happen to have one. Care greatly for books

and literature. Venerate poor scholars, but don't shout for "Wilkes and Liberty!" The one is a whoremonger, the other a flatulency.

'If any tyrant prevents your goings out and your comings in, fill your pockets with large stones and kill him as he passes. Then go home and think no more about it. Never theorize about Revolution. Finally, pay your score at your club and your final debt to Nature generously and without casting the account too narrowly. Don't be a prig like Sir John Hawkins, or your own enemy like Bozzy, or a Whig like Burke, or a vile wretch like Rousseau, or pretend to be an atheist like Hume, but be a good fellow, and don't insist upon being remembered more than a month after you are dead.'

This is but the First Lesson. To compose the Second would be a more

difficult task and must not be here attempted. These two volumes of Dr. Hill are endless in their variety. Johnson was gloomy enough, and many of his letters may well move you to tears, but his was ever a human gloom. The year before his death he writes to Mrs. Thrale:

"The black dog I hope always to resist and in time to drive, though I am deprived of almost all those that used to help me. The neighbourhood is impoverished. I had once Richardson and Lawrence in my reach. Mrs. Allen is dead. My house has lost Levet, a man who took interest in everything and therefore ready at conversation. Mrs. Williams is so weak that she can be a companion no longer. When I rise my breakfast is solitary—the black dog waits to share it; from breakfast to dinner he continues barking, except that Dr. Brocklesby for a little

keeps him at a distance. Dinner with a sick woman you may venture to suppose not much better than solitary. After dinner, what remains but to count the clock and hope for that sleep which I can scarce expect? Night comes at last, and some hours of restlessness and confusion bring me again to a day of solitude. What shall exclude the black dog from an habitation like this? If I were a little richer I would perhaps take some cheerful female into the house.'

It is a melancholy picture, but the 'cheerful female' shoots a ray of light across the gloom. Everyone should add these two volumes to his library, and if he has not a library, let him begin making one with them.

RICHARD CUMBERLAND.

'HE has written comedies at which we have cried and tragedies at which we have laughed; he has composed indecent novels and religious epics; he has pandered to the public lust for personal anecdote by writing his own life and the private history of his acquaintances.' Of whom is this a portrait, and who is the limner? What are the names of the comedies and the tragedies and the novels thus highly recommended to the curious reader? These are questions, I flatter myself, wholly devoid of public interest.

The quotation is from a review in the *Quarterly*, written by Sir Walter Scott, of old Richard Cumberland's

last novel, 'John de Lancaster,' published in 1809, when its author, 'the Terence of England,' was well-nigh eighty years of age. The passage is a fierce one, but Scott's good-nature was proof against everything but affectation. No man minded a bad novel less than the author of 'Guy Mannering' and 'The Heart of Midlothian.' I am certain he could have pulled Bishop Thirlwall through 'The Wide, Wide World,' in the middle of which, for some unaccountable reason, that great novel-reading prelate stuck fast. But an author had only to pooh-pooh the public taste, to sneer at popularity, to discourse solemnly on his function as a teacher of his age and master of his craft, to make Sir Walter show his teeth, and his fangs were formidable; and the storm of his wrath all the more tremendous because bursting from a clear sky.

I will quote a few words from the passage in 'John de Lancaster' which made Scott so angry, and which he pronounced a doleful lamentation over the 'praise and pudding which Cumberland alleges have been gobbled up by his contemporaries':

'If in the course of my literary labours I had been less studious to adhere to nature and simplicity, I am perfectly convinced I should have stood higher in estimation with the purchasers of copyright, and probably have been read and patronized by my contemporaries in the proportion of ten to one.'

It seems a harmless kind of bleat after all, but it was enough to sting Scott to fury, and make him fall upon the old man in a manner somewhat too savage and tartarly. Some years later, and after Cumberland was dead, Sir Walter wrote a sketch of

his life in the vein we are better accustomed to associate with the name of Scott.

Cumberland was a voluminous author, having written two epics, thirty-eight dramatic pieces, including a revised version of 'Timon of Athens'—of which Horace Walpole said, 'he has caught the manners and diction of the original so exactly that I think it is full as bad a play as it was before he corrected it'—a score or two of fugitive poetical compositions, including some verses to Dr. James, whose powders played almost as large a part in the lives of men of that time as Garrick himself, numerous prose publications and three novels, 'Arundel,' 'Henry,' and 'John de Lancaster.' Of the novels, 'Henry' is the one to which Sir Walter's epitaph is least inapplicable—but Cumberland meant no harm. Were I to be discovered on

Primrose Hill, or any other eminence, reading 'Henry,' I should blush no deeper than if the book had been 'David Grieve.'

Cumberland has, of course, no place in men's memories by virtue of his plays, poems, or novels. Even the catholic Chambers gives no extracts from Cumberland in the 'Encyclopedia.' What keeps him for ever alive is—first, his place in Goldsmith's great poem, 'Retaliation'; secondly, his memoirs, to which Sir Walter refers so unkindly; and thirdly, the tradition—the well-supported tradition—that he was the original 'Sir Fretful Plagiary.'

On this last point we have the authority of Croker, and there is none better for anything disagreeable Croker says he knew Cumberland well for the last dozen years of his life, and that to his last day he resembled Sir Fretful.'

The Memoirs were first published in 1806, in a splendidly printed quarto. The author wanted money badly, and Lackington's house gave him £500 for his manuscript. It is an excellent book. I do not quarrel with Mr. Leslie Stephen's description of it in the 'National Dictionary of Biography': 'A very loose book, dateless, inaccurate, but with interesting accounts of men of note.' All I mean by excellent is excellent to read. The Memoirs touch upon many points of interest. Cumberland was born in the Master's Lodge, at Trinity, Cambridge, in the Judge's Chamber—a room hung round with portraits of 'hanging judges' in their official robes, and where a great Anglican divine and preacher told me he had once passed a sleepless night, so scared was he by these sinful emblems of human justice. There is an admirable account in Cumber-

land's Memoirs of his maternal grandfather, the famous Richard Bentley, and of the Vice-Master, Dr. Walker, fit to be read along with De Quincey's spirited essay on the same subject. Then the scene is shifted to Dublin Castle, where Cumberland was Ulster-Secretary when Halifax was Lord-Lieutenant, and Single-speech Hamilton had acquired by purchase (for a brief season) the brains of Edmund Burke. There is a wonderful sketch of Bubb Dodington and his villa 'La Trappe,' on the banks of the Thames, whither one fair evening Wedderburn brought Mrs. Haughton in a hackney-coach. You read of Dr. Johnson and Dr. Goldsmith, of Garrick and Foote, and participate in the bustle and malice of the play-house. Unluckily, Cumberland was sent to Spain on a mission, and came home with a grievance. This part is dull, but in

all other respects the Memoirs are good to read.

Cumberland's father, who became an Irish bishop, is depicted by his son as a most pleasing character; and no doubt of his having been so would ever have entered a head always disposed to think well of fathers had not my copy of the Memoirs been annotated throughout in the nervous, scholarly hand of a long-previous owner who, for some reason or another, hated the Cumberlands, the Whig clergy, and the Irish people with a hatred which found ample room and verge enough in the spacious margins of the Memoirs.

I print one only of these splenetic notes:

'I forget whether I have noticed this elsewhere, therefore I will make sure. In the novel "Arundel," Cum-

berland has drawn an exact picture of himself as secretary to Halifax, and has made the father of the hero a clergyman and a keen electioneerer —the vilest character in fiction. The laborious exculpation of Parson Cumberland in these Memoirs does not wipe out the scandal of such a picture. In spite of all he says, we cannot help suspecting that Parson Cumberland and Joseph Arunde. had a likeness. N.B.—In both novels (*i.e.*, "Arundel" and "Henry") the portrait of a modern clergyman is too true. But it is strange that Cumberland, thus hankering after the Church, should have volunteered two such characters as Joseph Arundel and Claypole.'

'Whispering tongues can poison truth,' and a persistent annotator who writes a legible hand is not easily shaken off.

Perhaps the best story in the book is the one about which there is most doubt. I refer to the well-known and often-quoted account of the first night of 'She Stoops to Conquer,' and of the famous band of *claqueurs* who early took their places, determined to see the play through. Cumberland tells the story with the irresistible verve of falsehood — of the early dinner at the 'Shakespeare Tavern,' 'where Samuel Johnson took the chair at the head of a long table, and was the life and soul of the corps'; of the guests assembled, including Fitzherbert (who had committed suicide at an earlier date), of the adjournment to the theatre with Adam Drummond of amiable memory, who 'was gifted by Nature with the most sonorous and at the same time the most contagious laugh that ever echoed from the human lungs. The neighing of the horse of the son of

Hystaspes was a whisper to it; the whole thunder of the theatre could not drown it'; and on the story rolls.

It has to be given up. There was a dinner, but it is doubtful whether Cumberland was at it; and as for the proceedings at the theatre, others who were there have pronounced Cumberland's story a bit of *blague*. According to the newspapers of the day, Cumberland, instead of sitting by Drummond's side and telling him when to laugh in his peculiar manner, was visibly chagrined by the success of the piece, and as wretched as any man could well be. But Adam Drummond must have been a reality. His laugh still echoes in one's ears.

ALEXANDER KNOX AND THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

AMONGST the many *bizarre* things that attended the events which led up to the Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland, was the circumstance that Lord Castlereagh's private secretary during the period should have been that Mr. Alexander Knox whose Remains in four rather doleful volumes were once cherished by a certain school of theologians.

Mr. Knox was a man of great piety, some learning, and of the utmost simplicity of life and manners. He

was one of the first of our moderns to be enamoured of primitive Christian times, and to seek to avoid the claims of Rome upon the allegiance of all Catholic-minded souls by hooking himself on to a period prior to the full development of those claims.

It is no doubt true that, for a long time past, Nonconformists of different kinds have boldly asserted that they were primitive; but it must be owned that they have never taken the least pains to ascertain the actual facts of the case. Now, Mr. Knox took great pains to be primitive. Whether he succeeded it is not for me to say, but at all events he went so far on his way to success as to leave off being modern both in his ways of thought and in his judgments of men and books.

English Nonconformity has pro-

duced many hundreds of volumes of biography and Remains, but there is never a primitive one amongst them. To anyone who may wish to know what it is to be primitive, there is but one answer: Read the Remains of Alexander Knox. Be careful to get the right Knox. There was one Vicesimus, who is much better known than Alexander, and at least as readable, but (and this is the whole point) not at all primitive.

And it was this primitive, apostolic Mr. Knox who is held by some to be the real parent of the Tractarian movement, whose correspondence is almost entirely religious, and whose whole character stands revealed in his Remains as that of a man without guile, and as obstinate as a mule, who was chosen at a most critical moment of political history to share the guilty secrets of Mr. Pitt and

Lord Castlereagh. It seems preposterous.

The one and only thing in Knox's Remains of the least interest to people who are not primitive, is a letter addressed to him by Lord Castlereagh, written after the completion of the Union, and suggesting to him the propriety of his undertaking the task of writing the history of that event—the reason being his thorough knowledge of all the circumstances of the case.

Such a letter bids us pause.

By this time we know well enough how the Act of Union was carried. By bribery and corruption. Nobody has ever denied it for the last fifty years. It has been in the school text-books for generations. But the point is, Did Mr. Knox know? If he did, it must seem to all who have read his Remains—and it is worth

while reading them only to enjoy the sensation—a most marvellous thing. It would not be more marvellous had we learnt from Canon Liddon's long-looked-for volumes that Mr. Pusey was Mr. Disraeli's adviser in all matters relating to the disposition of the secret service money and the Tory election funds. If Knox did not know anything about it, how was he kept in ignorance, how was he sheltered from the greedy Irish peers and boroughmongers and all the other impecunious rascals who had the vending of a nation? And what are we to think of the foresight of Castlereagh, who secured for himself such a secretary in order that, after all was over, Mr. Knox might sit down and in all innocence become the historian of proceedings of which he had been allowed to know nothing, but which

sorely needed the cloak of a holy life and conversation to cover up their sores?

It is an odd problem. For my part, I believe in Knox's innocence. Trying very hard to be worthy of the second century was not good training for seeing his way through the fag-end of the eighteenth. Apart from this, it is amazing what some men will not see. I recall but will not quote the brisk retort of Mrs. Saddletree at her husband's expense, which relates to the incapacity of that learned saddler to see what was going on under his nose. The test was a severe one, but we have no doubt whatever that Alexander Knox could have stood it as well as Mr. Bartoline Saddletree.

Another strange incident connected with the same event is that the final ratification of the Act of Union in

Dublin was witnessed by, and made, as it could not fail to do, a great impression upon, the most accomplished rhetorical writer of our time. De Quincey, then a precocious boy of fifteen, happened by a lucky chance to be in Ireland at the time, and as the guest of Lord Altamount, an Irish peer, he had every opportunity both of seeing the sight and acquainting himself with the feelings of some of the leading actors in the play, call it tragedy, comedy, or farce, as you please.

De Quincey's account of the scene, and his two chapters on the Irish Rebellion, are to be found in the first volume of his 'Autobiographic Sketches.'

De Quincey hints that both Lord Altamount and his son, 'who had an Irish heart,' would have been glad if at the very last moment the populace

had stepped in between Mr. Pitt and the Irish peers and commoners and compelled the two Houses to perpetuate themselves. Internally, says De Quincey, they would have laughed. But it was written otherwise in Heaven's chancery, and 'the Bill received the Royal assent without a muttering or a whispering or the protesting echo of a sigh. . . One person only I remarked whose features were suddenly illuminated by a smile—a sarcastic smile, as I read it—which, however, might be all fancy. It was Lord Castlereagh.' Can it possibly be that this was the very moment when it occurred to his lordship's mind that Mr. Knox was the man to be the historian of the event thus concluded?

The new edition of De Quincey's writings has naturally provoked many critics to attempt to do for him what

he was fond enough of doing for others, often to their dismay—to give some account, that is, of the author and the man. De Quincey does not lend himself to this familiar treatment. He eludes analysis and baffles description. His great fault as an author is best described, in the decayed language of the equity draughtsman, as multifariousness. His style lacks the charm of economy, and his workmanship the dignity of concentration.

A literary spendthrift is, however, a very endurable sinner in these stingy days. Mr. Mill speaks somewhere (I think in his 'Political Economy') almost sorrowfully of De Quincey's strange habit of scattering fine thoughts up and down his merely miscellaneous writings. The habit has ceased to afflict the reader. The fine maxim 'Waste not, want not,' is now in-

scribed over the desks of our miscellaneous writers. Such extravagance as De Quincey's, as it is not likely to be repeated, need not be too severely reprobated.

De Quincey's magnificence, the apparent boundlessness of his information, the liberties he takes, relying upon his mastery of language, his sportiveness and freakish fancies, make him the idol of all hobbledehoys of a literary turn. By them his sixteen volumes are greedily devoured. Happy the country, one is tempted to exclaim, that has such reading to offer its young men and maidens!

The discovery that De Quincey wrote something else besides the 'Opium Eater' marks a red-letter day in many a young life. The papers on 'The Twelve Cæsars'; on the 'Essenes and Secret Societies'; on 'Judas Iscariot,' 'Cicero,' and

'Richard Bentley'; 'The Spanish Nun,' the 'Female Infidel,' the 'Tartars,' seemed the very climax of literary well-doing, and to unite the learning of the schools with all the fancy of the poets and the wit of the world.

As one grows older, one grows sterner—with others.

> 'Prune thou thy words, the thoughts control
> That o'er thee swell and throng;
> They will condense within thy soul,
> And change to purpose strong.'

The lines have a literary as well as a moral value.

But though paradox may cease to charm, and a tutored intellect seem to sober age a better guide than a lawless fancy, and a chastened style a more comfortable thing than impassioned prose and pages of *bravura*, still, after all, 'the days of our youth are the days of our glory,' and for a reader who is both young and eager

the Selections Grave and Gay of Thomas de Quincey will always be above criticism, and belong to the realm of rapture.

HANNAH MORE.

AN ingenious friend of mine, who has collected a library in which every book is either a masterpiece of wit or a miracle of rarity, found great fault with me the other day for adding to my motley heap the writings of Mrs. Hannah More. In vain I pleaded I had given but eight shillings and sixpence for the nineteen volumes, neatly bound and lettered on the back. He was not thinking, so he protested, of my purse, but of my taste, and he went away, spurning the gravel under his feet, irritated that there should be such men as I.

I, however, am prepared to brazen

it out I freely admit that the celebrated Mrs. Hannah More is one of the most detestable writers that ever held a pen. She flounders like a huge conger-eel in an ocean of dingy morality. She may have been a wit in her youth, though I am not aware of any evidence of it—certainly her poem, 'Bas Bleu,' is none—but for all the rest of her days, and they were many, she was an encyclopædia of all literary vices. You may search her nineteen volumes through without lighting upon one original thought, one happy phrase. Her religion lacks reality. Not a single expression of genuine piety, of heart-felt emotion, ever escapes her lips. She is never pathetic, never terrible. Her creed is powerless either to attract the well-disposed or make the guilty tremble. No naughty child ever read 'The Fairchild Family' or 'Stories from the Church Cate-

chism' without quaking and quivering like a short-haired puppy after a ducking; but, then, Mrs. Sherwood was a woman of genius, whilst Mrs. Hannah More was a pompous failure.

Still, she has a merit of her own, just enough to enable a middle-aged man to chew the cud of reflection as he hastily turns her endless pages. She is an explanatory author, helping you to understand how sundry people who were old when you were young came to be the folk they were, and to have the books upon their shelves they had.

Hannah More was the first, and I trust the worst, of a large class—'the ugliest of her daughters Hannah,' if I may parody a poet she affected to admire. This class may be imperfectly described as 'the well-to-do Christian.' It inhabited snug places in the country, and kept an excellent, if not dainty, table.

The money it saved in a ball-room it spent upon a greenhouse. Its horses were fat, and its coachman invariably present at family prayers. Its pet virtue was Church twice on Sunday, and its peculiar horrors theatrical entertainments, dancing, and three-penny points. Outside its garden wall lived the poor who, if virtuous, were for ever curtsying to the ground or wearing neat uniforms, except when expiring upon truckle-beds beseeching God to bless the young ladies of The Grange or the Manor House, as the case might be.

As a book 'Cœlebs in Search of a Wife' is as odious as it is absurd—yet for the reason already assigned it may be read with a certain curiosity—but as it would be cruelty to attempt to make good my point by quotation, I must leave it as it is.

It is characteristic of the unreality of Hannah More that she prefers

Akenside to Cowper, despite the latter's superior piety. Cowper's sincerity and pungent satire frightened her; the verbosity of Akenside was much to her mind:

'Sir John is a passionate lover of poetry, in which he has a fine taste. He read it [a passage from Akenside's "Pleasures of Imagination"] with much spirit and feeling, especially these truly classical lines:

> "'*Mind—mind* alone; bear witness, earth and heaven,
> The living fountains in itself contains
> Of Beauteous and Sublime; here hand in hand
> Sit paramount the graces; here enthroned
> Celestial Venus, with divinest airs,
> Invites the soul to never-fading joy."

'"The reputation of this exquisite passage," said he, laying down the book, "is established by the consenting suffrage of all men of taste, though, by the critical countenance you are beginning to put on you look as if you had a mind to attack it."

'"So far from it," said I [Cœlebs], "*that I know nothing more splendid in the whole mass of our poetry.*"'

Miss More had an odd life before she underwent what she calls a 'revolution in her sentiments,' a revolution, however, which I fear left her heart of hearts unchanged. She consorted with wits, though always, be it fairly admitted, on terms of decorum. She wrote three tragedies, which were not rejected as they deserved to be, but duly appeared on the boards of London and Bath with prologues and epilogues by Garrick and by Sheridan. She dined and supped and made merry. She had a prodigious flirtation with Dr. Johnson, who called her a saucy girl, albeit she was thirty-seven; and once, for there was no end to his waggery, lamented she had not married Chatterton, 'that posterity might have seen a propagation of

poets.' The good doctor, however, sickened of her flattery, and one of the rudest speeches even he ever made was addressed to her.

After Johnson's death Hannah met Boswell, full of his intended book which she did her best to spoil with her oily fatuity. Said she to Boswell, 'I beseech your tenderness for our virtuous and most revered departed friend; I beg you will mitigate some of his asperities,' to which diabolical counsel the Inimitable replied roughly, 'He would not cut off his claws nor make a tiger a cat to please anybody.'

The most moving incident in Hannah More's life occurred near its close, and when she was a lone, lorn woman—her sisters Mary, Betty, Sally, and Patty having all predeceased her. She and they had long lived in a nice house or 'place' called Barley Wood, in the neighbour-

hood of Bristol, and here her sisters one after another died, leaving poor Hannah in solitary grandeur to the tender mercies of Mrs. Susan, the housekeeper; Miss Teddy, the lady's-maid; Mrs. Rebecca, the housemaid; Mrs. Jane, the cook; Miss Sally, the scullion; Mr. Timothy, the coachman; Mr. John, the gardener; and Mr. Tom, the gardener's man. Eight servants and one aged pilgrim —of such was the household of Barley Wood!

Outwardly decorum reigned. Poor Miss More fondly imagined her domestics doted on her, and that they joyfully obeyed her laws. It was the practice at family prayer for each of the servants to repeat a text. Visitors were much impressed, and went away delighted. But like so many other things on this round world, it was all hollow. These menials were not what they seemed.

After Miss More had heard them say their texts and had gone to bed, their day began. They gave parties to the servants and tradespeople of the vicinity (pleasing word), and at last, in mere superfluity of naughtiness, hired a large room a mile off and issued invitations to a great ball. This undid them. There happened to be at Barley Wood on the very night of the dance a vigilant visitor who had her suspicions, and who accordingly kept watch and ward. She heard the texts, but she did not go to bed, and from her window she saw the whole household, under cover of night, steal off to their promiscuous friskings, leaving behind them poor Miss Sally only, whose sad duty it was to let them in the next morning, which she duly performed.

Friends were called in, and grave consultations held, and in the end

Miss More was told how she had been wounded in her own household. It was sore news; she bore it well, wisely determined to quit Barley Wood once and for ever, and live, as a decent old lady should, in a terrace in Clifton. The wicked servants were not told of this resolve until the actual moment of departure had arrived, when they were summoned into the drawing-room, where they found their mistress, and a company of friends. In feeling tones Miss Hannah More upbraided them for their unfaithfulness. 'You have driven me,' said she, 'from my own home, and forced me to seek a rêfuge among strangers.' So saying, she stepped into her carriage and was driven away. There is surely something Miltonic about this scene, which is, at all events, better than anything in Akenside's 'Pleasures of Imagination.'

The old lady was of course much happier at No. 4, Windsor Terrace, Clifton, than she had been at Barley Wood. She was eighty-three years of age when she took up house there, and eighty-nine when she died, which she did on the 1st of September, 1833. I am indebted for these melancholy —and, I believe, veracious—particulars to that amusing book of Joseph Cottle's called 'Early Recollections, chiefly relating to the late Samuel Taylor Coleridge during his long residence in Bristol.'

I still maintain that Hannah More's works in nineteen volumes are worth eight shillings and sixpence.

MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF.

MISS MATHILDE BLIND, in the introduction to her animated and admirable translation of the now notorious 'Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff,' asks an exceedingly relevant question—namely, 'Is it well or is it ill done to make the world our father confessor?' Miss Blind does not answer her own question, but passes on her way content with the observation that, be it well or ill done, it is supremely interesting. Translators have, indeed, no occasion to worry about such inquiries. It is hard enough for them to make their author speak another language than his own, without stopping to ask

whether he ought to have spoken at all. Their business is to make their author known. As for the author himself, he, of course, has a responsibility; but, as a rule, he is only thinking of himself, and only anxious to excite interest in that subject. If he succeeds in doing this, he is indifferent to everything else. And in this he is encouraged by the world.

Burns, in his exuberant generosity, was sure that it could afford small pleasure

> 'Even to a deil
> To skelp and scaud poor dogs like me,
> And hear us squeal;'

but whatever may be the devil's taste, there is nothing the reading public like better than to hear the squeal of some self-torturing atom of humanity. And, as the atoms have found this out, a good deal of squealing may be confidently anticipated.

The eclipse of faith has not proved

fatal by any means to the instinct of confession. There is a noticeable desire to make humanity or the reading public our residuary legatee, to endow it with our experiences, to enrich it with our egotisms, to strip ourselves bare in the market-place—if not for the edification, at all events for the amusement, of man. All this is accomplished by autobiography. We then become interesting, probably for the first time, as, to employ Mlle. Bashkirtseff's language, 'documents of human nature.'

The metaphor carries us far. To falsify documents by addition, or to garble them by omission, is an offence of grave character, though of frequent occurrence. Is there, then, to be no reticence in autobiography? Are the documents of human nature to be printed at length?

These are questions which each autobiographer must settle for him-

self. If what is published is interesting for any reason whatsoever, be it the work of pious sincerity or diseased self-consciousness, the world will read it, and either applaud the piety or ridicule the absurdity of the author. If it is not interesting it will not be read.

Therefore, to consider the ethics of autobiography is to condemn yourself to the academy. 'Rousseau's Confessions' ought never to have been written; but written they were, and read they will ever be. But as a pastime moralizing has a rare charm. We cannot always be reading immoral masterpieces. A time comes when inaction is pleasant, and when it is soothing to hear mild accents murmuring 'Thou shalt not.' For a moment, then, let the point remain under consideration.

The ethics of autobiography are, in my judgment, admirably summed

up by George Eliot, in a passage in 'Theophrastus Such,' a book which, we were once assured, well-nigh destroyed the reputation of its author, but which would certainly have established that of most living writers upon a surer foundation than they at present occupy. George Eliot says:

'In all autobiography there is, nay, ought to be, an incompleteness which may have the effect of falsity. We are each of us bound to reticence by the piety we owe to those who have been nearest to us, and have had a mingled influence over our lives—by the fellow-feeling which should restrain us from turning our volunteered and picked confessions into an act of accusation against others who have no chance of vindicating themselves, and, most of all, by that reverence for the higher efforts of our common nature which commands us to bury

its lowest faculties, its invincible remnants of the brute, its most agonizing struggle with temptation, in unbroken silence.'

All this is surely sound morality and good manners, but it is not the morality or the manners of Mlle. Marie Bashkirtseff, who was always ready to barter everything for something she called Fame.

'If I don't win fame,' says she over and over again, 'I will kill myself.'

Miss Blind is, no doubt, correct in her assertion that, as a painter, Mlle. Bashkirtseff's strong point was expression. Certainly, she had a great gift that way with her pen. Amidst a mass of greedy utterances, esurient longings, commonplace ejaculations, and unlovely revelations, passages occur in this journal which bid us hold. For all her boastings, her

sincerity is not always obvious, but it speaks plainly through each one of the following words:

'What is there in us, that, in spite of plausible arguments—in spite of the consciousness that all leads to *nothing*—we should still grumble? I know that, like everyone else, I am going on towards death and nothingness. I weigh the circumstances of life, and, whatever they may be, they appear to me miserably vain, and, for all that, I cannot resign myself. Then, it must be a force; it must be a *something*—not merely "a passage," a certain period of time, which matters little whether it is spent in a palace or in a cellar; there is, then, something stronger, truer, than our foolish phrases about it all. It is life, in short; not merely a passage—an unprofitable misery—but life, all that

we hold most dear, all that we call ours, in short.

'People say it is nothing, because we do not possess eternity. Ah! the fools. Life is ourselves, it is ours, it is all that we possess; how, then, is it possible to say that it is *nothing?* If this is *nothing*, show me *something*.'

To deride life is indeed foolish. Prosperous people are apt to do so, whether their prosperity be of this world or anticipated in the next. The rich man bids the poor man lead an abstemious life in his youth, and scorn delights, in order that he may have the wherewithal to spend a dull old age; but the poor man replies:

'Your arrangements have left me nothing but my youth. I will enjoy that, and *you* shall support me in a dull old age.'

To deride life, I repeat, is foolish; but to pity yourself for having to die is to carry egotism rather too far. This is what Mlle. Bashkirtseff does.

'I am touched myself when I think of my end. No, it seems impossible! Nice, fifteen years, the three Graces, Rome, the follies of Naples, painting, ambition, unheard-of hopes—to end in a coffin, without having had anything, not even love.'

Impossible, indeed! There is not much use for that word in the human comedy.

Never, surely, before was there a lady so penetrated with her own personality as the writer of these journals. Her arms and legs, hips and shoulders, hopes and fears, pictures and future glory, are all alike scanned, admired, stroked, and pondered over. She reduces everything to one vast common denomi-

nator—herself. She gives two francs to a starving family.

'It was a sight to see the joy, the surprise of these poor creatures. I hid myself behind the trees. Heaven has never treated me so well; heaven has never had any of these beneficent fancies.'

Heaven had, at all events, never heard the like of this before. Here is a human creature brought up in what is called the lap of luxury, wearing purple and fine linen, and fur cloaks worth 2,000 francs, eating and drinking to repletion, and indulging herself in every fancy; she divides a handful of coppers amongst five starving persons, and then retires behind a tree, and calls God to witness that no such kindness had ever been extended to her.

When Mlle. Elsnitz, her long-suffering companion—'young, only nineteen, unfortunate, in a strange

house without a friend'—at last, after suffering many things, leaves the service, it is recorded:

'I could not speak for fear of crying, and I affected a careless look, but I hope she may have seen.'

Seen what? Why, that the carelessness was unreal. A quite sufficient reparation for months of insolence, in the opinion of Miss Marie.

It is said that Mlle. Bashkirtseff had a great faculty of enjoyment. If so, except in the case of books, she hardly makes it felt. Reading evidently gave her great pleasure; but, though there is a good deal of rapture about Nature in her journals, it is of an uneasy character.

'The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is amongst the lonely hills,'

do not pass into the souls of those whose ambition it is to be greeted with loud cheers by the whole wide world.

Whoever is deeply interested in himself always invents a God whom he can apostrophize on suitable occasions. The existence of this deity feeds his creator's vanity. When the world turns a deaf ear to his broken cries he besieges heaven. The Almighty, so he flatters himself, cannot escape him. When there is no one else to have recourse to, when all other means fail, there still remains —God. When your father, and your mother, and your aunt, and your companion, and your maid, are all wearied to death by your exhaustless vanity, you have still another string to your bow. Sometimes, indeed, the strings may get entangled.

'Just now, I spoke harshly to my aunt, but I could not help it. She came in just when I was weeping with my hands over my face, and was summoning God to attend to me a little.'

A book like this makes one wonder what power, human or divine, can exorcise such a demon of vanity as that which possessed the soul of this most unhappy girl. Carlyle strove with great energy in 'Sartor Resartus' to compose a spell which should cleave this devil in three. For a time it worked well and did some mischief, but now the magician's wand seems broken. Religion, indeed, can still show her conquests, and, when we are considering a question like this, seems a fresher thing than it does when we are reading 'Lux Mundi.'

'Do you want,' wrote General Gordon in his journal, 'to be loved, respected, and trusted? Then ignore the likes and dislikes of man in regard to your actions; leave their love for God's, taking Him only. You will find that as you do so men will like you; they may despise some things in you, but they will lean on you, and

trust you, and He will give you the spirit of comforting them. But try to please men and ignore God, and you will fail miserably and get nothing but disappointment.'

All those who have not yet read these journals, and prefer doing so in English, should get Miss Blind's volumes. There they will find this 'human document' most vigorously translated into their native tongue. It, perhaps, sounds better in French.

One remembers George Eliot's tale of the lady who tried to repeat in English the pathetic story of a French mendicant—'J'ai vu le sang de mon père'—but failed to excite sympathy, owing to the hopeless realism of Saxon speech. But though better in French, the journal is interesting in English. Whether, like the dreadful Dean, you regard man as an odious race of vermin, or agree with an erecter spirit that he is a being of

infinite capacity, you will find food for your philosophy, and texts for your sermons, in the 'Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff.'

SIR JOHN VANBRUGH.

JEREMY COLLIER begins his famous and witty, though dreadfully overdone, 'Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage' with the following spirited words:

'The business of Plays is to recommend Virtue and discountenance Vice; to show the Uncertainty of Human Greatness, the sudden turns of Fate, and the unhappy conclusions of Violence and Injustice; 'tis to expose the singularities of Pride and Fancy, to make Folly and Falsehood contemptible, and to bring everything that is ill under Infamy and Neglect.'

He then adds: 'This design has

been oddly pursued by the English Stage;' and so he launches his case.

Sir John Vanbrugh, who fared very badly at the doctor's hands, replied—and, on the whole, with great spirit and considerable success — in a pamphlet entitled 'A Short Vindication of "The Relapse" and "The Provok'd Wife" from Immorality and Profaneness.' In this reply he strikes out this bold apophthegm:

'The business of Comedy is to show people what they should do, by representing them upon the stage, doing what they should not.'

He continues with much good sense:

'Nor is there any necessity a philosopher should stand by, like an interpreter at a puppet-show, to explain the moral to the audience. The mystery is seldom so deep but the

pit and boxes can dive into it, and 'tis their example out of the playhouse that chiefly influences the galleries. The stage is a glass for the world to view itself in; people ought, therefore, to see themselves as they are; if it makes their faces too fair, they won't know they are dirty, and, by consequence, will neglect to wash them. If, therefore, I have showed "Constant" upon the stage what generally the thing called a fine gentleman is off it, I think I have done what I should do. I have laid open his vices as well as his virtues; 'tis the business of the audience to observe where his flaws lessen his value, and, by considering the deformity of his blemishes, become sensible how much a finer thing he would be without them.'

It is impossible to improve upon these instructions; they are admir-

able. The only pity is that, as, naturally enough, Sir John wrote his plays first, and defended them afterwards, he had not bestowed a thought upon the subject until the angry parson gave him check. Vanbrugh, like most dramatists of his calibre, wrote to please the town, without any thought of doing good or harm. The two things he wanted were money and a reputation for wit. To lecture and scold him as if he had degraded some high and holy office was ridiculous. Collier had an excellent case, for there can be no doubt that the dramatists he squinted at were worse than they had any need to be. But it is impossible to read Collier's two small books without a good many pishes and pshaws! He was a clericalist of an aggressive type. You cannot withhold your sympathy from Vanbrugh's remark:

'The reader may here be pleased

to take notice what this gentleman would construe profaneness if he were once in the saddle with a good pair of spurs upon his heels.'

Now that Evangelicalism has gone out of fashion, we no longer hear denunciations of stage-plays. High Church parsons crowd the Lyceum, and lead the laughter in less dignified if more amusing resorts. But, for all that, there is a case to be made against the cheerful playhouse, but not by me.

As for Sir John Vanbrugh, his two well-known plays, 'The Relapse' and 'The Provok'd Wife,' are most excellent reading, Jeremy Collier notwithstanding. They must be read with the easy tolerance, the amused benignity, the scornful philosophy of a Christian of the Dr. Johnson type. You must not probe your laughter deep; you must forget for awhile your probationary state, and remem-

ber that, after all, the thing is but a play. Sir John has a great deal of wit of that genuine kind which is free from modishness. He reads freshly. He also has ideas. In 'The Provok'd Wife,' which was acted for the first time in the early part of 1697, there appears the Philosophy of Clothes (thus forestalling Swift), and also an early conception of Carlyle's stupendous image of a naked House of Lords. This occurs in a conversation between Heartfree and Constant, which concludes thus:

Heartfree. Then for her outside—I consider it merely as an outside—she has a thin, tiffany covering over just such stuff as you and I are made on. As for her motion, her mien, her air, and all those tricks, I know they affect you mightily. If you should see your mistress at a coronation, dragging her peacock's train,

with all her state and insolence, about her, 'twould strike you with all the awful thoughts that heaven itself could pretend to from you; whereas, I turn the whole matter into a jest, and suppose her strutting in the self-same stately manner, with nothing on but her stays and her under, scanty-quilted petticoat.

Constant. Hold thy profane tongue! for I'll hear no more.

'The Relapse' must, I think, be pronounced Vanbrugh's best comedy. Lord Foppington is a humorous conception, and the whole dialogue is animated and to the point. One sees where Sheridan got his style. There are more brains, if less sparkle, in Vanbrugh's repartees than in Sheridan's.

Berenthia. I have had so much discourse with her, that I believe,

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were she once cured of her fondness to her husband, the fortress of her virtue would not be so impregnable as she fancies.

Worthy. What! she runs, I'll warrant you, into that common mistake of fond wives, who conclude themselves virtuous because they can refuse a man they don't like when they have got one they do.

Berenthia. True; and, therefore, I think 'tis a presumptuous thing in a woman to assume the name of virtuous till she has heartily hated her husband and been soundly in love with somebody else.

A handsome edition of Vanbrugh's Plays has recently appeared, edited by Mr. W. C. Ward (Lawrence and Bullen), who has prepared an excellent Life of his author.

Vanbrugh was, as all the world knows, the architect of Blenheim

Palace, as he also was of Castle Howard. He became Comptroller of Works in the reign of Queen Anne, and was appointed by King George Surveyor of the Works at Greenwich Hospital, in the neighbourhood of which he had property of his own. His name is still familiar in the ears of the respectable inhabitants of Blackheath. But what is mysterious is how and where he acquired such skill as he possessed in his profession. His father, Giles Vanbrugh, had nineteen children, of whom thirteen appear to have lived for some length of time, and of John's education nothing precise is known. When nineteen he went into France, where he remained some years.

During this period, observes Mr. Ward, 'it may be presumed he laid the foundation of that skill in architecture he afterwards so eminently displayed; at least, there is no subse-

quent period of his life to which we can, with equal probability, ascribe his studies in that art.'

Later on, Mr. Ward says:

'The year 1702 presents our author in a new character. Of his architectural studies we know absolutely nothing, unless we may accept Swift's account, who pretends that Vanbrugh acquired the rudiments of the art by watching children building houses of cards or clay. But this was probably ironical. However he came by his skill, in 1702 he stepped into sudden fame as the architect of Castle Howard.'

It is indeed extraordinary that a man should have undertaken such big jobs as Castle Howard and Blenheim without leaving any trace whatever of the means by which he became credited with the power to execute them. Mr. Pecksniff got an occa-

sional pupil and premium, but, so far as I know, he never designed so much as a parish pump. Blenheim is exposed to a good deal of criticism, but nobody can afford to despise either it or Castle Howard, and it seems certain that the original plans and elevations of both structures were prepared by the author of 'The Relapse' and 'The Provok'd Wife' himself. Of course, there may have been a ghost, but if there had been, the Duchess of Marlborough, who was soon at loggerheads with her architect, would probably have dragged it into the light of day.

The wits made great fun of their distinguished colleague's feats in brick and mortar. It was not usually permissible for a literary gentleman to be anything else, unless, indeed, a divine like Dr. Swift, whose satirical verses on the small house Vanbrugh built for himself in Whitehall are

well known. They led to a coolness, and no one need wonder. After the architect's death the divine apologized and expressed regret.

The well-known epigram—

> 'Under this stone, reader, survey
> Dead Sir John Vanbrugh's house of clay
> Lie heavy on him, Earth, for he
> Laid many heavy loads on thee'—

is the composition of another doctor of divinity—Dr. Abel Evans—and was probably prompted by envy.

Amongst other things, Vanbrugh was a Herald, and in that capacity visited Hanover in 1706, and helped to invest the Electoral Prince, afterwards George II., with the Order of the Garter. Vanbrugh's personality is not clearly revealed to us anywhere, but he appears to have been a pleasant companion and witty talker. He married late in life, and of three children only one survived, to be killed at Fontenoy. He himself died

in 1726, in his sixty-third year, of a quinsy. His widow survived him half a century, thus affording another proof, if proof be needed, that no man is indispensable.

JOHN GAY.

THE first half of the eighteenth century was in England the poet's playground. These rhyming gentry had then a status, a claim upon private munificence and the public purse which has long since been hopelessly barred. A measure of wit, a tincture of taste, and a perseverance in demand would in those days secure for the puling Muse slices of solid pudding whilst in the flesh, and (frequently) sepulture in the Abbey when all was over.

What silk-mercer's apprentice in these hard times, finding a place behind Messrs. Marshall and Snelgrove's counter not jumping with

his genius, dare hope by the easy expedient of publishing a pamphlet on 'The Present State of Wit' to become domestic steward to a semi-royal Duchess, and the friend of Mr. Lewis Morris and Mr. Lecky, who are, I suppose, our nineteenth-century equivalents for Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift? Yet such was the happy fate of Gay, who, after an idle life of undeserved good-fortune and much unmanly repining, died of an inflammation, in spite of the skilled care of Arbuthnot and the unwearying solicitude of the Duchess of Queensberry, and was interred like a peer of the realm in Westminster Abbey, having for his pall-bearers the Earl of Chesterfield, Viscount Cornbury, the Hon. Mr. Berkeley, General Dormer, Mr. Gore, and Mr. Pope. Such a recognition of the author of 'Fables' and 'The Beggars' Opera' must make Mr.

Besant's mouth water. Nor did Gay, despite heavy losses in the South Sea Company, die a pauper; he left £6,000 behind him, which, as he was wise enough to die intestate, was divided equally between his two surviving sisters.

Gay's good luck has never forsaken him. He enjoys, if, indeed, the word be not the hollowest of mockeries, an eternity of fame. It is true he is not read much, but he is always read a little. He has been dead more than a century and a half, so it seems likely that a hundred and fifty years hence he will be read as much as he is now, and, like a cork, will be observed bobbing on the surface of men's memories. Better men and better poets than he have been, and will be, entirely submerged; but he was happy in his hour, happy even in his name (which lent itself to rhyme), happy in his nature; and so

(such at least is our prognostication) new editions of Gay's slender remains will at long intervals continue to appear and to attract a moment's attention, even as Mr. Underhill's admirable edition of the poems has lately done; new anthologies will contain his name, the biographical dictionaries will never quite forget him, his tomb in the Abbey will be stared at by impressionable youngsters, Pope's striking epitaph will invite the fault-finding of the critical, and his own jesting couplet incur the censure of the moralist, until the day dawns when men cease to forget themselves in trifles. As soon as they do this, Gay will be forgotten once and for ever.

Gay's one real achievement was 'The Beggars' Opera,' which sprang from a sprout of Swift's great brain. A 'Newgate pastoral might make an odd, pretty sort of thing,' so the

Dean once remarked to Gay; and as Mr. Underhill, in his admirable Life of our poet, reminds us, Swift repeated the suggestion in a letter to Pope: 'What think you of a Newgate pastoral among the whores and thieves there?' But Swift's 'Beggars' Opera' would not have hit the public taste between wind and water as did Gay's. It would have been much too tremendous a thing—its sincerity would have damned it past redemption. Even in Gay's light hands the thing was risky—a speculation in the public fancy which could not but be dangerous. Gay knew this well enough, hence his quotation from Martial (afterwards adopted by the Tennysons as the motto for 'Poems by Two Brothers'), *Nos hæc novimus esse nihil*. Congreve, resting on his laurels, declared it would either take greatly, or be damned confoundedly. It took, and, indeed, we cannot

wonder. There was a foretaste of Gilbert about it quite enough to make its fortune in any century. Furthermore, it drove out of England, so writes an early editor, 'for that season, the Italian opera, which had carried all before it for several years.' It was a triumph for the home-bred article, and therefore dear to the souls of all true patriots.

The piece, though as wholly without sincerity as a pastoral by Ambrose Philips, a thing merely of the footlights, entirely shorn of a single one of the rays which glorify lawlessness in Burns's 'Jolly Beggars,' yet manages through the medium of the songs to convey a pleasing though absurd sentimentality; and there is, perhaps, noticeable throughout a slight—a very slight—flavour of what is cantingly but conveniently called 'the Revolution,' which imparts a slender interest.

'The Beggars' Opera' startled the propriety of that strange institution, the Church of England—a seminary of true religion which had left the task of protesting against the foulness of Dryden and Wycherley and the unscrupulous wit of Congreve and Vanbrugh to the hands of non-jurors like Collier and Law, but which, speaking, we suppose, in the interests of property, raised a warning voice when a comic opera made fun, not of marriage vows, but of highway robbery. Dr. Herring, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, plucked up courage to preach against 'The Beggars' Opera' before the Court, but the Head of the Church paid no attention to the divine, and, with the Queen and all the princesses, attended the twenty-first representation. The piece brought good luck all round. 'Everybody,' so Mr. Underhill assures us, 'connected

with the theatre (Lincoln's Inn Fields), from the principal performer down to the box-keepers, got a benefit,' and Miss Lavinia Fenton, who played Polly Peachum, lived to become Duchess of Bolton; whilst Hogarth painted no less than three pictures of the celebrated scene, 'How happy could I be with either —were t'other dear charmer away.'

Dr. Johnson, in his 'Life of Gay,' deals scornfully with the absurd notion that robbers were multiplied by the popularity of 'The Beggars' Opera.' 'It is not likely to do good,' says the Doctor, 'nor can it be conceived, without more speculation than life requires or admits, to be productive of much evil.' The Church of England might as well have held its tongue.

Gay, flushed with success, was not long in producing a sequel called 'Polly,' which, however, as it

was supposed to offend, not against morality, which it undoubtedly did, but against Sir Robert Walpole, was prohibited. 'Polly' was printed, and, being prohibited, had a great sale. It is an exceedingly nasty piece, not unworthy of one of the three authors who between them produced that stupidest of farces, 'Three Hours after Marriage.'

Gay's third opera, 'Achilles,' was produced at Covent Garden after his death. One does not need to be a classical purist to be offended at the sight of 'Achilles' upon a stage, singing doggerel verses to the tune of 'Butter'd Pease,' or at hearing Ajax exclaim:

> 'Honour called me to the task,
> No matter for explaining,
> 'Tis a fresh affront to ask
> A man of honour's meaning.'

This vulgar and idiotic stuff ran twenty nights.

Gay's best-known poetical pieces are his 'Fables,' and his undoubtedly interesting, though intrinsically dull 'Trivia; or, The Art of Walking the Streets of London,' though for our own part we would as lief read his 'Shepherds' Week' as anything else Gay has ever written.

The 'Fables' are light and lively, and might safely be recommended to all who are fond of an easy quotation. To lay them down is never difficult, and if, after having done so, Swift's 'Confession of the Beasts' is taken up, how vast the difference! There are, we know, those in whose nature there is too much of the milk of human kindness to enable them to enjoy Swift when he shows his teeth; but however this may be, we confess, if we are to read at all, we must prefer Swift's 'Beasts' Confession' to all the sixty-five fables of Gay put together.

'The Swine with contrite heart allow'd
His shape and beauty made him proud
In diet was perhaps too nice,
But gluttony was ne'er his vice;
In every turn of life content
And meekly took what fortune sent.
Inquire through all the parish round,
A better neighbour ne'ér was found.
His vigilance might some displease;
'Tis true he hated sloth like pease.

'The Chaplain vows he cannot fawn,
Though it would raise him to the lawn.
He passed his hours among his books,
You find it in his meagre looks.
He might if he were worldly wise
Preferment get and spare his eyes;
But owns he has a stubborn spirit
That made him trust alone to merit;
Would rise by merit to promotion.
Alas! a mere chimeric notion.'

Gay was found pleasing by his friends, and had, we must believe, a kind heart. Swift, who was a nice observer in such matters, in his famous poem on his own death, assigns Gay a week in which to grieve:

'Poor Pope would grieve a month, and Gay
A week, and Arbuthnot a day;
St. John himself will scarce forbear
To bite his pen and drop a tear;
The rest will give a shrug and cry,
"I'm sorry, but we all must die."'

It is a matter of notoriety that Gay was very fat and fond of eating. He is, as we have already said, buried in Westminster Abbey, over against Chaucer. When all the rubbish is carted away from the Abbey to make room for the great men and women of the twentieth century, Gay will probably be accounted just good enough to remain where he is. He always was a lucky fellow, though he had not the grace to think so.

ROGER NORTH'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

THE Cambridge wit who some vast amount of years ago sang of Bohn's publications, 'so useful to the student of Latin and Greek,' hit with unerring precision the main characteristic of those very numerous volumes. Utility was the badge of all that tribe, save, indeed, of those woeful 'Extra Volumes' which are as much out of place amongst their grave brethren as John Knox at a ballet. There was something in the binding of Messrs. Bohn's books which was austere, and even forbidding; their excellence, their authority, could not be denied by even a youthful desperado, but read-

ing them always wore the stern aspect of duty. The binding had undoubtedly a good deal to do with this. It has now been discarded by Messrs. George Bell and Sons, the present proprietors, in favour of brighter colours. The difference thus effected is enormous. The old binding is kept in stock because, so we are told, 'it is endeared to many book-lovers by association.' The piety of Messrs. Bell has misled them. No book-lover, we feel certain, ever held one of Messrs. Bohn's publications in his hands except to read it.

A valuable addition has lately been made to the 'Standard Library' by the publication—in three bright and cheerful volumes—of Roger North's well-known 'Lives of the Norths,' and also—and this practically for the first time—of Roger North's Autobiography, a book unknown to Macaulay, and which he would have

read with fierce interest, bludgeon in hand, having no love for the family.

Dr. Jessopp, who edits the volumes with his accustomed skill, mentions in the Preface how the manuscript of the Autobiography belonged to the late Mr. Crossley, of Manchester, and was sold after the death of that bibliophile, in 1883, and four years later printed for private circulation. It now comes before the general public. It is not long, and deserves attention. The style is gritty and the story far from exciting, but the book is interesting, particularly for lawyers, a deserving class of readers for whose special entertainment small care is usually taken.

Roger North was born at Tostock, in Suffolk, in 1653—the youngest of his brothers. Never was man more of a younger brother than he. This book of his might be called 'The Autobiography of a Younger Brother.'

The elder brother was, of course, Francis, afterwards Lord Guilford, a well-hated man, both in his own day and after it, but who at all events looked well after Roger, who was some sixteen years his junior.

In 1669 Roger North was admitted a student of the Middle Temple, Francis being then a Bencher of that learned society. Roger had chambers on the west side of Middle Temple Lane, and £10 wherewith to furnish them and buy a gown, and other necessaries. He says it was not enough, but that he managed to make it serve. His excellent mother, though she had some ten children and a difficult husband, produced £30, with which he bought law books. His father allowed him £40 a year, and he had his big brother at hand to help him out of debt now and again.

He was, we feel as we read, a little

uneasy under his brother's eye. The elder North had a disagreeable fashion of putting 'little contempts upon his brother, and a way of raising his own character by depressing Roger's, which was hard to bear. But Roger North bore it bravely; he meant sticking to his brother, and stick he did. In five years he saw Francis become King's Counsel, Solicitor, and Attorney-General. 'If he should die, writes Roger, 'I am lost.' But Francis did not die, which was as well, for he was much better suited for this world than the next.

Roger North was no great student of the law. He was fond of mathematics, optics, mechanics, architecture, music, and of sailing a small yacht—given him by Mr. Windham, of Felbrigge—on the Thames; and he gives in his Autobiography interesting accounts of these pastimes.

He was very anxious indeed to get on and make money, but he relied more upon his brother than upon either his own brains or his own industry.

In 1674 Francis North became Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, succeeding Sir John Vaughan, the friend of Selden; and Roger at once got himself called to the Bar, and thenceforward, so far as possible, whenever Francis was on the Bench, there was Roger pleading before him. Indeed, it went much further than this. 'I kept so closely to him that I can safely say I saw him abed every night without intermission for divers years together, which enables me to contradict the malicious report a relation raised of him, that he kept a mistress as the mode of that time was.' The morals of a Chief Justice two centuries after his death having no personal concern for this genera-

tion, I feel free to confess that I am rather sorry for Francis with Roger ever by his side in this unpleasantly pertinacious fashion. The younger North, so he tells us, always drove down to Westminster with the Chief Justice, and he frankly admits that his chief *appui* was his brother's character, fame, and interest. Not being a Serjeant, Roger could not actually practise in the Common Pleas, but on various circuits, at the Guildhall, at the Treasury, and wherever else he could lawfully go before the Chief Justice, there Roger went and got a business together. He also made money, sometimes as much as £9 a day, from court-keeping—that is, attending manor courts. This was a device of his elder brother's, who used to practise it before he was called to the Bar. It savours of pettifogging. However, it seems in Roger's case to

have led to his obtaining the patent office of Temporal Steward to the See of Canterbury, to which he had the courage to stick after the deprivation of Archbishop Sancroft. This dogged devotion to the Church redeems North's life from a commonplacedness which would otherwise be hopeless. The Archbishop left his faithful steward £20 for a ring, but North preferred, like a wise man, to buy books, which he had bound in the Archbishop's manner.

In 1682 Roger North 'took silk,' as the phrase now goes, and became one of the Attorney-General's devils, in which capacity his name is to be found in the reports of the trial of Lord William Russell. What he says about that trial in the Autobiography is just what might be expected from an Attorney-General's devil—that is, that never before was a State trial conducted with such

candour and fairness. He admits that this is not the judgment of the world; but then, says he, 'the world never did nor will understand its true good, or reward, encourage, or endure its true patriots and friends.'

At the end of 1683 Francis North came home one night with no less remarkable a companion in his coach than the Great Seal. Roger instantly transposed himself to the Court of Chancery, where he began coining money. 'My whole study,' he says, 'is causes and motions.' He found it hard work, but he buckled to, and boasts—like so many of his brethren, alive as well as dead—that he, at all events, always read his briefs. In the first year his fees amounted to £4,000, in the second to nearly as much, but in the third there was a falling off, owing to a smaller quantity of business in the Court. A

new Lord Keeper was always the occasion of the rehearing of old causes. The defeated litigants wished to try their luck before the new man.

North was at first astonished with the size of the fees he was offered; he even refused them, thinking them bribes: 'but my fellow-practisers' conversation soon cured me of that nicety.' And yet the biggest fee he ever got was twenty guineas. Ten guineas was the usual fee on a 'huge' brief, and five 'in the better sort of causes.' In ordinary cases Roger North would take two or three guineas, and one guinea for motions and defences.

In the Long Vacations Roger still stuck to his brother, who, no doubt, found him useful. Thus when the Mayor, Aldermen, and Council of Banbury came over to Wroxton to pay their respects to the Lord Keeper,

they were handed over to the charge of Roger, who walked them all over the house to show the rooms, and then made them drunk at dinner 'and dismissed them to their lodgings in ditches homeward bound.' But the effort was too much for him, and no sooner were they gone than he had to lie down, all on fire, upon the ground, from which he rose very sick and scarce recovered in some days. As a rule he was a most temperate man, and hated the custom and extravagance of drinking. He had not enough understanding to obfuscate it by drink.

All went well with the brothers until the death of Charles II. Then the horizon grew troubled —but still Roger was being talked of as a Baron of the Exchequer, when the Lord Keeper died on September 5, 1685. With him ended the public life of his younger

brother. Roger North was only thirty-two. He was a King's Counsel, and in considerable practice, but he had not the will—perhaps he had not the force—to stand alone. At the Revolution he became a non-juror, and retired into the country. His Autobiography also ceases with his brother's death.

He had much private family business to transact, and in 1690 he bought the Rougham estate in Norfolk, where he carried on building and planting on a considerable scale. He married and had children, bought books, restored the parish church, and finally died on March 1, 1734, in his eighty-first year.

Dr. Jessopp tells us very little is left of Roger North—his house has been pulled down, his trees pulled up, and his books dispersed. But his Lives of his three brothers, and now his own Autobiography, will

keep his memory green. There is something about him one rather likes, though were we asked what it is, we should have no answer ready.

BOOKS OLD AND NEW.

NOW that our century has entered upon its last decade, and draws near the hour which will despatch it to join its too frequently and most unjustly despised predecessor, it is pleasing to note how well it has learnt to play the old man's part. One has only to compare the *Edinburgh Review* of, say, October, 1807, with its last number, to appreciate the change that has come over us. Cocksureness, once the badge of the tribe of critics, is banished to the schoolroom. The hearty hatreds of our early days would ill befit a death-bed. A keen critic has observed what a noisy

place England used to be. Everybody cried out loud in the market-place, in the Senate-house, in the Law Courts, in the Reviews and Magazines. In the year 1845 the *Times* newspaper incurred the heavy and doubtless the just censure of the Oxford Union for its unprincipled tone as shown in its 'violent attempts to foment agitation as well by inflammatory articles as by the artifices of correspondents.' How different it now is! We all move about as it were in list slippers. Our watchword is 'Hush!' Dickens tells us how, at Hone's funeral, Cruikshank, being annoyed at some of the observations of the officiating minister, whispered in Dickens' ear as they both moved to kneel at prayer, 'If this wasn't a funeral I would punch his head.' It was a commendable restraint. We are now, all of us, exercising it.

A gloomy view is being generally taken of our literary future in the next century. Poetry, it is pretty generally agreed, has died with Lord Tennyson. Who, it is said, can take any pride or pleasure in the nineties, whose memory can carry him back to the sixties? What days those were that gave us brand-new from the press 'Philip' and 'The Four Georges,' 'The Mill on the Floss' and 'Silas Marner,' 'Evan Harrington' and 'Rhoda Fleming,' 'Maud,' 'The Idylls of the King,' and 'Dramatis Personæ,' Mr. Arnold's New Poems, the 'Apologia pro Vitâ Suâ,' and 'Verses on Various Occasions,' four volumes of 'Frederick the Great,' and 'The Origin of Species'! One wonders in the retrospect how human stupidity was proof against such an onslaught of wit, such a shower of golden fancies. Why did not Folly's fortress

fall? We know it did not, for it is standing yet. Nor has any particular halo gathered round the sixties—which, indeed, were no better than the fifties or the forties.

From what source, so ask 'the frosty pows,' are you who call yourselves 'jolly candidates' for 1900, going to get your supplies? Where are your markets? Who will crowd the theatre on your opening nights? What well-graced actors will then cross your stage? Your boys and girls will be well provided for, one can see that. Story-books and handbooks will jostle for supremacy; but your men and women, all a-hungered, how are you going to feed them and keep their tempers sweet? It is not a question of side dishes, but of joints. Sermons and sonnets, and even 'clergy-poets,' may be counted upon, but they will only affront the appetites they can never satisfy.

What will be wanted are Sam Wellers, Captain Costigans, and Jane Eyres—poetry that lives, controversy that bites, speeches that stir the imagination.

Thus far the aged century. To argue with it would be absurd; to silence it cruel, and perhaps impossible. Greedy Time will soon do that.

But suppose it should turn out to be the fact that we are about to enter upon a period of well-cultivated mediocrity. What then? Centuries cannot be expected to go on repeating the symptoms of their predecessors. We have had no Burns. We cannot, therefore, expect to end with the beginnings of a Wordsworth and a Coleridge; there may likely be a lull. The lull may also be a relief. Of all odd crazes, the craze to be for ever reading new books is one of the oddest.

Hazlitt may be found grappling with this subject, and, as usual, 'punishing' it severely in his own inimitable style. 'I hate,' says he, in the second volume of 'The Plain Speaker'—in the essay entitled 'On Reading Old Books'—'to read new books;' and he continues, a page further on, 'Contemporary writers may generally be divided into two classes—one's friends or one's foes. Of the first we are compelled to think too well, and of the last we are disposed to think too ill, to receive much genuine pleasure from the perusal, or to judge fairly of the merit of either. One candidate for literary fame who happens to be of our acquaintance writes finely and like a man of genius, but unfortunately has a foolish face, which spoils a delicate passage; another inspires us with the highest respect for his personal talents and character, but

does not come up to our expectations in print. All these contradictions and petty details interrupt the calm current of our reflections.'

Hazlitt was no doubt a good hater. We are now of milder mood. It ought not to be difficult for any of us, if we but struggle a little, to keep a man's nose out of his novel. But, for all that, it is certain that true literary sway is borne but by the dead. Living authors may stir and stimulate us, provoke our energies, and excite our sympathy, but it is the dead who rule us from their urns.

Authority has no place in matters concerning books and reading, else it would be well were some proportion fixed between the claims of living and dead authors.

There is no sillier affectation than that of old-worldism. To rave about Sir Thomas Browne and know

nothing of William Cobbett is foolish. To turn your back upon your own time is simply to provoke living wags, with rudimentary but effective humour, to chalk opprobrious epithets upon your person. But, on the other hand, to depend upon your contemporaries for literary sustenance, to be reduced to scan the lists of 'Forthcoming Works' with a hungry eye, to complain of a dearth of new poems, and new novels, and new sermons, is worse than affectation—it is stupidity.

There was a time when old books were hard to procure and difficult to house. With the exception of a few of the greatest, it required as much courage to explore the domains of our old authors as it did to visit Wast Water or Loch Maree before the era of roads and railways. The first step was to turn the folios into octavos, and to publish complete

editions; the second was to cheapen the price of issue. The first cheap booksellers were, it is sometimes alleged, men of questionable character in their trade. Yet their names should be cherished. They made many young lives happy, and fostered better taste than either or both the Universities. Hogg, Cooke, Millar, Donaldson, Bell, even Tegg, the 'extraneous Tegg' of Carlyle's famous Parliamentary petition, did good work in their day. Somehow or another the family libraries of the more respectable booksellers hung fire. They did not find their way about. Perhaps their authors were selected with too much care.

'He wales a portion with judicious care.'

The pious Cottar did well, but the world is larger than the family; besides which it is not always 'Saturday Night.' Cooke had no scruples.

He published 'Tom Jones' in fortnightly, and (I think) sixpenny parts, embellished with cuts, and after the same appetising fashion proceeded right through the 'British Novelists.' He did the same with the 'British Poets.' It was a noble enterprise. You never see on a stall one of Cooke's books but it is soiled by honest usage; its odour speaks of the thousand thumbs that have turned over its pages with delight. Cooke made an immense fortune, and deserved to do so. He believed both in genius and his country. He gave the people cheap books, and they bought them gladly. He died at an advanced age in 1810. Perhaps when he came to do so he was glad he had published a series of 'Sacred Classics,' as well as 'Tom Jones.'

We are now living in an age of handsome reprints. It is possible to

publish a good-sized book on good paper and sell it at a profit for fourpence halfpenny. But of course to do this, as the profit is too small to bear division, you must get the Authors out of the way. Our admirable copyright laws and their own sedentary habits do this on the whole satisfactorily and in due course. Consequently dead authors are amazingly cheap. Not merely Shakespeare and Milton, Bunyan and Burns, but Scott and Macaulay, Thackeray and Dickens. Living authors are deadly dear. You may buy twenty books by dead men at the price of one work by a living man. The odds are fearful. For my part, I hope a *modus vivendi* may be established between the publishers of the dead and those of the living; but when you examine the contents of the 'Camelot Classics,' the 'Carisbrooke Library,' the 'Chandos Clas-

sics,' the 'Canterbury Poets,' the 'Mermaid Series of the Old Dramatists,' and remember, or try to remember, the publishing lists of Messrs. Routledge, Mr. Black, Messrs Warne, and Messrs. Cassell, it is easy for the reader to snap his fingers at Fate. It cannot touch him—he can dine for many a day. Even were our 'lyrical cry' to be stifled for half a century, what with Mr. Bullen's 'Elizabethan Lyrics,' and 'More Elizabethan Lyrics,' and 'Lyrics from the Dramatists,' and 'Lyrics from the Romances,' and Mr. Palgrave's 'Golden Treasury,' 'a man,' as Mr. Markham observes in 'David Copperfield,' 'might get on very well here,' even though that man were, as Markham asserted himself to be, 'hungry all day long.' A British poet does not cease to be a poet because he is dead, nor is he,

for that matter, any the better a poet for being alive.

As for a scarcity of living poets proving national decadence, it would be hard to make out that case. Who sang Chatham's victories by sea and land?

BOOK-BINDING.

THERE is a familiar anecdote of the ingenious author of 'The Seasons,' 'Rule, Britannia,' and other excellent pieces, that when he sent a well-bound copy of his poems to his father, who had always regarded him, not altogether unjustly, as a 'feckless loon,' that canny Scot handled the volume with unfeigned delight, and believing that his son had bound it, cried out admiringly, 'Who would have thought our Jamie could have done the like of this?' This particular copy has not been preserved, and it is therefore impossible for us to determine how far its bibliopegic merits

justified the rapture of the elder Thomson, whose standard is not likely to have been a high one. Indeed, despite his rusticity, he was probably a better judge of poetry than of binding.

This noble craft has revived in our midst. Twenty years ago, in ordinary circles, the book-binder was a miscreant who, by the aid of a sharp knife, a hideous assortment of calf-skins and of marbled papers, bound your books for you by slaughtering their margins, stripping their sides, and returning them upon your hands cropped and in prison garb, and so lettered as to tell no man what they were. And the worst of it was we received them with complacency, gave them harbourage upon our shelves, and only grumbled that the price was so high as four shillings a volume. Those days are over. Yet it is well to be occasion-

ally reminded of the rock from whence we were hewn, and the pit out of which we were digged. I have now lying before me a first edition of the essays of Elia which, being in boards, I allowed to be treated by a provincial called Shimmin, in the sixties. I remember its coming home, and how I thought it was all right. Infancy was no excuse for such ignorance.

The second-hand booksellers, a race of men for whom I have the greatest respect, are to blame in this matter. They did not play the part they might have been expected to do. They gave no prominence in their catalogues, which are the true text-books of literature, to specimens of book-binding, nor did they instil into the minds of their young customers the rudiments of taste. Worse than this, some of the second-hand booksellers in the

country were themselves binders, and, for the most part, infamous ones.

One did, indeed, sometimes hear of Roger Payne and of the Harleian style, but dimly, and as a thing of no moment, nor were our eyes ever regaled in booksellers' catalogues with facsimiles of the exquisite bindings of the French and English masters. Nor was it until we went further afield, and became acquainted with the booksellers of Paris, that this new world swam into our ken. It was a great day when a stray copy of a 'Bulletin Mensuel' of Damascene Morgand, the famous bookseller in the Passage des Panoramas, fell into the hands of a mere country book-buyer. Then he knew how brutally he had been deceived—then he looked with loathing on his truncated tomes and their abominable devices. The first really

bound book I ever saw was a copy of the works of Pierre de Ronsard bearing the devices of Marguerite de Valois. The price was so far beyond my resources that I left the shop without a touch of envy, but the scales had fallen from my eyes, and I walked down the Passage des Panoramas as one who had awakened from a dream.

Nowadays it is quite different. The Arts and Crafts Exhibition did much, and the second-hand booksellers, in quite ordinary places, are beginning to give in their catalogues reproductions of noble specimens. Nothing else is required. To see is enough. There was recently, as most people know, a wonderful exhibition of bindings to be seen at the Burlington Fine Art Club, but what is not so generally known is that the Club has published a magnificent catalogue of the contents of that Exhibition,

with no less than 114 plates reproducing with the greatest possible skill and delicacy some of the finest specimens. Mr. Gordon Duff, who is credited with a profounder knowledge of pigskins than any living man, has contributed a short preface to the volume, whilst Miss Prideaux, herself a binder of great merit, has written a general introduction, in which she traces the history of the craft, and duly records the names of the most famous binders of Europe. A more fascinating picture-book cannot be imagined, for to the charm of colour and design is added all the feeling which only a book can impart. Such a book as this marks an epoch, and ought to be the beginning of a time when even sale-catalogues shall take pains to be splendid.

When the library of the Baron de Lacarelle came to be dispersed at

his death a few years ago, the auctioneer's catalogue, as issued by Charles Porquet, of the Quai Voltaire, made a volume which, wherever it goes, imparts dignity to human endeavour, and consecrates a virtuoso's whim. It was but a small library—only 540 books—and to call it well selected would be to abuse a term one has learnt to connect with Major Ponto's library in 'The Book of Snobs.' 'My library's small, says Ponto, with the most amazing impudence, 'but well selected, my boy, well selected. I have been reading the History of England all the morning.' He could not have done this in the Baron's library.

As you turn the pages of this glorified catalogue, his treasures seem to lie before you—you can almost stroke them. A devoted friend, *de la Société des Bibliophiles français*, contributes an ecstatic

sketch of the Baron's character, and tells us of him how he employed in his hunt after a book infinite artifice, and called to his aid all the resources of learned strategy—'poussant ses approches et manœuvrant, autour de la place, avec la prudence et le génie d'un tacticien consommé, si bien que le malheureux libraire, enlacé, fasciné, hypnotisé par ce grand charmeur, finissait presque toujours par capituler et se rendre.' This great man only believed in one modern binder: Trautz. The others did not exist for him. 'Cherchez-vous à le convertir? Il restait incorruptible et répétait invariablement, avec cet esprit charmant, mais un peu railleur, dont il avait le privilège, que s'il était jamais damné, son enfer serait de remuer une reliure de Capé ou de Lortic!'

It is all very splendid and costly

and grand, yet still from time to time,

'From the soul's subterranean depth upborne,

there comes the thought of Charles Lamb amidst 'the ragged veterans' he loved so well, and then in an instant a reaction sets in, and we almost hate this sumptuous Baron.

Thomson's "Seasons," again, looks best (I maintain it) a little torn and dog's-eared. How beautiful to a genuine lover of reading are the sullied leaves and worn-out appearance, nay, the very odour (beyond Russia), if we would not forget kind feelings in fastidiousness, of an old "circulating library" "Tom Jones" or the "Vicar of Wakefield"!' Thus far, Elia.

Let us admit that the highest and noblest joys are those which are in widest commonalty spread, and that accordingly the clay pipe of the

artisan is more truly emotional than the most marvellous meerschaum to be seen in the shop-windows of Vienna—still, the collector has his joys and his uses, his triumphant moments, his hours of depression, and, if only he publishes a catalogue, may be pronounced in small type a benefactor of the human race.

POETS LAUREATE.

ABOUT forty years ago two ingenious gentlemen, Mr. Austin, of Exeter College, and Mr. Ralph, a member of the Bar, published a book containing short sketches of the lives of Poets Laureate of this realm, beginning with Ben Jonson and ending with Wordsworth, and also an essay on the Title and Office. It has sometimes been rudely said that Laureates came into fashion when fools and jesters went out, but the perusal of Messrs. Austin and Ralph's introductory essay, to say nothing of the most cursory examination of the table of contents of their volume, is enough to disprove the truth of this saying.

A Laureate was originally a purely University title, bestowed upon those Masters of Arts who had exhibited skill in the manufacture of Latin verses, and had nothing to do with the civil authority or royal favour. Thus, the famous Skelton (1460-1529) was laureated at Oxford, and afterwards obtained permission to wear his laurel at Cambridge; but though tutor to King Henry VIII., and, according to Miss Strickland, the original corrupter of that monarch, he was never a Poet Laureate in the modern sense of the word; that is, he was never appointed to hold the place and quality of Poet Laureate to his Majesty. I regret this, for he was a man of original genius. Campbell, writing in 1819, admits his 'vehemence and vivacity,' but pronounces his humour 'vulgar and flippant,' and his style a texture of slang phrases; but Mr. Churton

Collins, in 1880, declares that Skelton reminds him more of Rabelais than any author in our language, and pronounces him one of the most versatile and essentially original of all our poets. We hold with Mr. Collins.

Skelton was popularly known as a Poet Laureate, and in the earliest edition of his poems, which bears no date, but is about 1520, he is described on the title-page as 'Mayster Skelton, Poet Laureate,' as he also is in the first collected edition of 1568, 'Pithy pleasaunt and profitable works of Maister Skelton, Poete Laureate.' This title was the University title, and not a royal one.

Spenser is sometimes reckoned amongst the Poets Laureate; but, as a matter of fact, he had no right to the title at all, nor did he or his publishers ever assume it. He is, of

course, one of the poetical glories of Cambridge, but he was never laureated there, nor did Queen Elizabeth ever appoint him her poet, though she granted him £50 a year.

The first Laureate, in the modern sense of the word, is undoubtedly Ben Jonson, to whom Charles I. made out a patent conferring upon this famous man £100 a year and 'a terse of Canary Spanish wine,' which latter benefit the miserable Pye commuted for £27. From Jonson to Tennyson there is no breach of continuity, for Sir William Davenant, who was appointed in 1638, survived till the Restoration, dying in 1668. The list is a curious one, and is just worth printing: Jonson, Davenant, Dryden, Shadwell, Nahum Tate, Rowe, the Rev. Laurence Eusden, Colley Cibber, William Whitehead, the Rev. Thomas Warton, Henry

James Pye, Robert Southey, William Wordsworth, Lord Tennyson.

One must be charitable in these matters. Here are fourteen names and four great ones—Jonson, Dryden, Wordsworth and Tennyson; two distinguished ones—Nicholas Rowe and Robert Southey; two clever names—Shadwell and Colley Cibber; two respectable names—Tate and Warton; one interesting name—Davenant; and three unutterable names—Eusden, Whitehead and Pye. After all, it is not so very bad. The office was offered to Gray, and he refused it. Pope, as a Roman Catholic, was out of the question. It would have suited Thomson well enough, and have tickled Goldsmith's fancy mightily. Collins died too young.

But Eusden, Whitehead and Pye, how did they manage it? and what in the name of wonder did they write?

Eusden was of Irish extraction, but was born the son of an English clergyman, and was like most poets a Cambridge man. He owed his appointment in 1718 to the Duke of Newcastle of the period, whose favour he had won by a poem addressed to him on the occasion of his marriage with the Lady Henrietta Godolphin. But he had also qualified for the office by verses sacred to the memory of George I., and in praise of George II.

> 'Hail, mighty monarch! whom desert alone
> Would, without birthright, raise up to the throne,
> Thy virtues shine peculiarly nice,
> Ungloomed with a confinity to vice.'

To do Grub Street justice, it was very angry with this appointment, and Hesiod Cooke wrote a poem called 'The Battle of the Poets,' in which the new Laureate was severely but truthfully handled in verse not conspicuously better than his own:

'Eusden, a laurelled bard by fortune rais'd,
By very few been read—by fewer prais'd.'

Eusden is the author of 'Verses Spoken at the Public Commencement in Cambridge,' published in quarto, which are said to be indecent. Our authors refer to them as follows:

'Those prurient lines which we dare not quote, but which the curious may see in the library of the British Museum, were specially composed and repeated for the edification and amusement of some of the noblest and fairest of our great-great-grandmothers.' Eusden took to drinking and translating Tasso, and died at his living, for he was a parson, of Coningsby in Lincolnshire.

Of William Whitehead you may read in Campbell's 'Specimens of the British Poets.' He was the son of a baker, was school-tutor to Lord Lymington, and having been treated at Oxford in the shabby way that seat of learning has ever treated

poets—from Shirley to Calverley—proceeded to Cambridge, that true nest of singing-birds, where he obtained a Fellowship and the post of domestic tutor to the eldest son of the Earl of Jersey. He was always fond of the theatre, and his first effort was a little farce which was never published, but which tempted him to compose heavy tragedies which were. Of these tragedies it would be absurd to speak; they never enjoyed any popularity, either on the stage or in the closet. He owed his appointment—which he did not obtain till Gray had refused it—entirely to his noble friends.

Campbell had the courage to reprint a longish poem of Whitehead's called 'Variety: a Tale for Married People.' It really is not very, very, bad, but it will never be reprinted again; and so I refer 'the curious' to Mr. Campbell's seventh volume.

As for Pye, he was a scholar and a gentleman, a barrister, a member of Parliament, and a police magistrate. On his father's death he inherited a large estate, which he actually sold to pay his parent's debts, though he was under no obligation to do so, as in those days a man's real estate was not liable to pay the debts he might chance to leave undischarged at his death. To pay a dead man's debts out of his land was to rob his heir. Pye was not famous as a Parliamentary orator, but he was not altogether silent, like Gibbon; for we read that in 1788 he told the House that his constituents had suffered from a scanty hay-harvest. He was appointed Laureate in 1790, and he died in 1813. He was always made fun of as a poet, and, unfortunately for him, there was another poet in the House at the same time, called Charles Small Pybus; hence the

jest, 'Pye et Parvus Pybus,' which was in everyone's mouth. He was a voluminous author and diligent translator, but I do not recollect ever seeing a single book of his in a shop, or on a stall, or in a catalogue. As a Poet Great Pye is dead—as dead as Parvus Pybus, M.P., but let us all try hard to remember that he paid his father's debts out of his own pocket.

'Only the actions of the just,
Smell *sweet* and blossom in their dust.'

PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES.

THE best time to study at leisure the habits and manners of the candidate for Parliament is shortly before an anticipated dissolution. Even as once in a series of years the astronomer furbishes up his telescope and observes the transit of a planet across the surface of the sun, so, as a General Election approaches, and when, consequently, candidates are numerous, the curious observer of human nature in all its wayward manifestations hastens to some place where experience has taught him candidates will be found gathered together.

No spot is so favourable for an investigation of this kind as the

scene of a contested by-election which takes place when a General Election is at no great distance. The investigation cannot with safety be postponed until a General Election. Then all is hurry and confusion. There is a fight in every constituency. No man can help his neighbour. Everybody is on his own war-path. There is, therefore, no concentration of candidates. They are scattered up and down the land, and so flurried that it is almost impossible to observe their humours. To appreciate a candidate properly takes time—a great deal of time. But at a by-election shortly before a General Election candidates are to be found in shoals—genuine candidates who have all gone through the proud process of selection, who enjoy a status peculiarly their own, who have a part to play, and play it with spirit. They hurry to the contest from afar.

With what readiness do they proffer their services! Like sea-birds, they come screaming and flapping their wings, and settle down at the same hotel, which for days resounds with their cheerful cries. This is quite the best place to observe them. In the smoking-room at night, after their oratorical labours are over, they are very great, very proud, very happy. Their talk is of their constituencies, as they are pleased to designate the districts which have chosen them. They retail the anecdotes with which they are wont to convulse their audiences. The stories are familiar, but not as they tell them.

What a contrast do these bright, hopeful creatures present to their taciturn, cynical companions! — sombre figures, who sit sucking at their pipes, the actual members of Parliament, who, far from flying

joyfully to the field of battle, as the candidate has just done, have been driven there, grunting and grumbling, by the angry crack of the party Whips.

As you listen to the frank, exuberant speech of the candidate, recounting the points he has made during the day, the conviction he has brought home to the waverer, the dilemmas he has thrust upon his opponents, the poor show made by somebody who thought to embarrass him by an interruption, and compare it with the gloomy asides of the member, who, however brave a figure he may have made upon the platform an hour or two before, seems now painfully alive to the inherent weakness of his cause, doubtful of victory anywhere, certain of defeat where he is, it is almost impossible to believe that once upon a time the member was himself a candidate.

Confidence is the badge of the tribe of candidates. How it is born, where it is bred, on what it feeds save vanity, we cannot tell. Figures cannot shake it. It is too majestical to be affected by ridicule. From scorn and brutal jest it turns contemptuously away. When a collision occurs between the boundless confidence of the candidate and the bottomless world-wearied scepticism of the member, it is interesting to note how wholly ineffectual is the latter to disturb, even for a moment, the beautifully poised equilibrium of the former.

'I always forget the name of the place you are trying for,' I lately overheard a member, during an election contest, observe at breakfast-time to a candidate.

'The Slowcombe Division of Mudfordshire,' replied the candidate.

'Oh!' said the member, with a

groan, as he savagely chipped at his egg; 'I thought they had given you something better than that.'

'I wish for nothing better,' said the candidate; 'I'm safe enough.'

And so saying, he rose from the table, and, taking his hat, went off on to the Parade, where he was soon joined by another candidate, and the pair whiled away a couple of hours in delightful converse.

The politics of candidates are fierce things. In this respect the British commodity differs materially from the American. Mr. Lowell introduces the American candidate as saying:

> 'Ez to my princerples, I glory
> In hevin' nothin' o' the sort.
> I ain't a Whig, I ain't a Tory—
> I'm just a Canderdate, in short.

Our candidates—good, excellent fellows that they are—are not a bit like Mr. Lowell's. They have as many principles as a fish has bones;

their vision is clear. The following expressions are constantly on their lips:

'I can see no difficulty about it—I have explained it all to my people over and over again, and no more can they. I and my constituency are entirely at one in the matter. I must say our leaders are very disappointing. My people are getting a little dissatisfied, though, of course, I tell them they must not expect everything at once, and I think they see that'—and so on for an hour or two.

There is nothing a candidate hates more than a practical difficulty; he feels discomfited by it. It destroys the harmony of his periods, the sweep of his generalizations. All such things he dismisses as detail, 'which need not now detain us, gentlemen.'

Herein, perhaps, consists the true happiness of the candidate. He is the embodied Hope of his party. He

will grapple with facts—when he becomes one. In the meantime he floats about, cheered wherever he goes. It is an intoxicating life.

Sometimes when candidates and members meet together—not to aid their common cause at a by-election, but for the purpose of discussing the prospects of their party—the situation gets a little accentuated. Candidates have a habit of glaring around them, which is distinctly unpleasant; whilst some members sniff the air, as if that were a recognised method of indicating the presence of candidates. Altogether, the less candidates and members see of one another, the better. They are antipathetic; they harm one another.

The self-satisfaction and hopefulness of the candidate, his noisy torrent of talk ere he is dashed below, his untiring enunciation of platitudes and fallacies, his abuse of

opponents, the weight of whose arm he has never felt—all these things, harmless as they are, far from displeasing in themselves, deepen the gloom of the sitting member, into whose soul the iron of St. Stephen's has entered, relax the tension of his mind, unnerve his vigour, corrode his faith; whilst, on the other hand, his demeanour and utterances, his brutal recognition of failure on his own side, and of merit in his opponent's, are puzzling to the candidate.

The leaders of parties will do well if they keep members and candidates apart. The latter should always herd together.

To do candidates justice, they are far more amusing, and much better worth studying, than members.

THE BONÂ-FIDE TRAVELLER.

THIS thirsty gentleman is threatened with extinction. His Sabbatical pint is in danger. He has been reported against by a Royal Commission. Threatened men, I know, live long, and it is not for me to raise false alarms, but though the end of the *bonâ-fide* traveller may be not yet, his glory has departed. His more than Sabbath-day journeys in search of the liquor that he loves, extended though they are by statute over three dreary, dusty miles of turnpike, have been ridiculed, and, worse than that, his *bonâ-fide* character — hitherto his proud passport to intoxication—has

been roughly condemned as pleonastic. A pretty pleonasm, truly, which has broached many a barrel. The Commissioners say, 'We think it would be advisable to eliminate the words *bonâ-fide*. No sensible person could suppose that the Legislature in using the word "traveller" meant to include persons who make a pretence only of being such, and are not travellers really and in fact.' At present there are two classes of Sunday travellers: there is the real traveller and there is the *bonâ-fide* traveller. It is the latter whose existence is menaced. The sooner he dies the better, for, in plain English, he is a drunken dog.

The Report of the Royal Commission as to the operation of the Welsh Sunday Closing Act of 1881 has been published, and, as the phrase runs, will repay perusal. It is full of humanity and details about

our neighbours, their habits and customs. However true it may have been, or still may be, that one half of the world does not know how the other half lives, it is a libel upon the curiosity of mankind to attribute this ignorance to indifference. No facts are more popular than those which relate to people's lives. Could it be discovered how many people prefer tea without sugar, the return would be printed in every newspaper of Great Britain, and be made the text of tens of thousands of leading articles. We are all alike in this respect, though some of us are ashamed to own it. We are by no means sure that the man answered badly who, when asked which of George Eliot's characters was lodged most firmly in human memories, replied boldly, Mrs. Linnet. Everybody remembers Mrs. Linnet, and grins broadly at the very mention

of her name. 'On taking up the biography of a celebrated preacher, she immediately turned to the end to see what disease he died of; and if his legs swelled as her own occasionally did, she felt a stronger interest in ascertaining any earlier facts in the history of the dropsical divine; whether he had ever fallen off a stage-coach, whether he had married more than one wife, and, in general, any adventures or repartees recorded of him prior to the epoch of his conversion. Then she glanced over the letters and diary, and wherever there was a predominance of Zion, the River of Life, and notes of exclamation, she turned over to the next page; but any passage in which she saw such promising nouns as "small-pox," "pony," or "boots and shoes," at once arrested her.' How inimitable it is! And yet Mr. Oscar Browning prefers 'Daniel Deronda.'

It is a comforting reflection that whether you write well or whether you write ill, you have always an audience.

But Mrs. Linnet's deep-rooted popularity proves how fond we all are of escaping from abstractions and predictions, and seizing hold of the things about which we really feel ourselves entitled to an opinion. Mrs. Linnet would have read a great part of the Report to which I have referred with much interest. It is full of most promising nouns. Mrs. Linnet's opinion as to a *bonâ-fide* traveller would be quite as valuable as Lord Balfour of Burleigh's.

But who is a *bonâ-fide* traveller? He is a person who seeks drink on Sunday during hours when by law public-houses are closed. He has therefore to make out a special case for being supplied with drink. The fact that he is thirsty counts for

nothing. Everybody is thirsty on Sunday. His special case is that he is not a resident, but a traveller, and wants refreshment to enable him to go on travelling. But here the law steps in, 'big-wigged, voluminous-jawed,' and adds this qualification—that nobody shall be considered a *bonâ-fide* traveller who is not three miles away from his last bed. An attorney's clerk of three months' standing could have foretold what has happened, namely, that everybody who is three miles from home becomes at once and *ipso facto* a *bonâ fide* traveller. You rap with your knuckles at the door of the shut inn; it is partially opened, and the cautious publican or his spouse inquires of you where you come from; you name a city of the plain four miles off, and the next moment finds you comfortably seated in the bar-parlour. Falsely to represent

yourself as a *bonâ-fide* traveller is a misdemeanour, but assuming you are three miles away from home, how can such a representation be made falsely? We are all pilgrims in this world. If my sole motive for walking three miles on Sunday is to get a pint of beer at the Griffin, doubtless I am not a *bonâ-fide* traveller, but if my motive be to get both the walk and the beer, who dare asperse my good faith? Should I have taken the walk but for the beer, or should I have taken the beer but for the walk? are questions far too nice to be made the subject of summary process.

The Commissioners cannot be accused of shirking this difficult question. They brace up their minds to it, and deliver themselves as follows. There is, say they, in language of almost Scriptural simplicity, first the traveller who makes

a journey either by railway or otherwise, on business or for some other necessary cause. His case, in the opinion of the Commissioners, is a simple one. He is entitled to drink by the way. But next, proceed the Commissioners in language of less merit, 'there is the individual who leaves his place of residence in the morning, or it may be later in the day, intending to be absent for some hours, inclusive perhaps, but not necessarily, of his mid-day meal, his object being primarily change of air and scene, exercise, relaxation of some kind, a visit to friends, or some reasonable cause other than merely to qualify for entrance into a licensed house.' This is the mixed-motive case already hinted at. Then, thirdly, there is the bold bad man 'who goes from his home to a point not less than three miles distant, either on foot or by wheeled

vehicle by road or rail, primarily if not solely to procure the drink which the Act denies him within three miles of where he lodged the previous night.' This gentleman is the genuine *bonâ-fide* traveller known to all policemen and magistrates, and it is he who is threatened with extinction. But how is he to be differentiated from the individual who leaves his place of residence in the morning and goes to a place, not in search of drink, but where, for all that, drink is? For example, it appears from this Report that near Swansea is a place of resort called the Mumbles. A great many people go there every Sunday, and a considerable number return home drunk at night; but, say the Commissioners, and we entirely believe them, 'it is impossible for us to say what proportion of them go for change and exercise and what proportion

for the sake of drink.' But if it be impossible, how is the distinction between the individual who leaves his place of residence in the morning, and the bold bad man, to be maintained?

There are those who would abolish the exemption in favour of travellers altogether. Let him who travels on Sunday take his liquor with him in a flask. There are others who would allow his glass to the traveller who is not on pleasure bent, but would refuse it to everybody else. A third party hold that a man who takes exercise for his health is as much entitled to refreshment as the traveller who goes on business. No one has been found bold enough to say a word for the man who travels in order that he may drink.

The Commissioners, after the wont of such men, steer a middle course. They agree with the Rev. Dr. Parry,

Moderator of the General Assembly of the Calvinistic Methodists of Wales, who declared that he would not exclude from reasonable refreshment 'a man who goes from his place of residence on Sunday to see the country'! I confess I should like to have both Dr. Parry's and a Welsh collier's opinion as to what is reasonable refreshment. Then, again, 'to see the country' is a vague phrase.

The Commissioners suggest a new clause, to run as follows:

'No person shall be deemed to be within the exception relating to travellers unless he proves that he was actually engaged in travelling for some purpose other than that of obtaining intoxicating liquor, and that he has not remained on the licensed premises longer than was reasonably required for the transac-

tion of his necessary business or for the purpose of necessary rest, refreshment, or shelter from the weather.'

This is nothing but a repeal of the three-mile limit. How is a wayfaring man to prove that he is travelling for some purpose other than that of obtaining intoxicating liquor? He can only assert the fact, and unless he is a notorious drunkard, both the publican and the magistrate are bound to believe him. Were the suggestion of the Commissioners to be carried out, it probably would be found that our old friend the *boná-fide* traveller could get his liquor and curtail his walk.

I should like Mrs. Linnet's opinion; but failing hers, can only express my own, which is that Sunday drinking is so bad a thing that if it can be stopped it ought to

be so, even though it were to follow as a consequence that no traveller could get drink from Saturday night till Monday morning except at the place where he spent the night.

'HOURS IN A LIBRARY.'

IN the face of the proverb about the pavement of the way to hell, I am prepared to maintain that good intentions are better than bad, and that evil is the wretch who is not full of good intentions and holy plans at the beginning of each New Year. Time, like a fruitful plain, then lies stretched before you; the eye rests on tuneful groves, cool meadow-lands, and sedgy streams, whither you propose to wander, and where you promise yourself many happy, well-spent hours. I speak in metaphors, of course—pale-faced Londoner that I am — my meadows

and streams are not marked upon the map: they are (coming at once to the point, for this is a generation which is only teased by allegory) the old books I mean to read over again during the good year of grace 1894. Yonder stately grove is Gibbon; that thicket, Hobbes; where the light glitters on the green surface (it is black mud below) is Sterne; healthful but penetrating winds stir Bishop Butler's pages and make your naked soul shiver, as you become more and more convinced, the longer you read, that 'someone has blundered,' though whether it is you or your Maker remains, like everything else, unsolved. Each one of us must make out his own list. It were cruelty to prolong mine, though it is but begun.

As a grace before meat, or, if the simile be preferred, as the *Zakuska* or *Vorschmack* before dinner, let me

urge upon all to read the three volumes, lately reissued and very considerably enlarged, called 'Hours in a Library,' by Mr. Leslie Stephen.

Mr. Stephen is a bracing writer. His criticisms are no sickly fruit of fond compliance with his authors. By no means are they this, but hence their charm. There is much pestilent trash now being talked about 'Ministry of Books,' and the 'Sublimity of Art,' and I know not what other fine phrases. It almost amounts to a religious service conducted before an altar of first editions. Mr. Stephen takes no part in such silly rites. He remains outside with a pail of cold water.

'It sometimes strikes readers of books that literature is, on the whole, a snare and a delusion. Writers, of course, do not generally share that impression; and on the contrary

have said a great many fine things about the charm of conversing with the choice minds of all ages, with the *innuendo*, to use the legal phrase, that they themselves modestly demand some place amongst the aforesaid choice minds. But at times we are disposed to retort upon our teachers. "Are you not," we observe, "exceedingly given to humbug?"'

Mr. Stephen has indeed, by way of preface to his own three volumes, collected a goodly number of these very fine things, but then he has, with grim humour, dubbed them 'Opinions of Authors,' thus reducing them to the familiar level of 'Nothing like leather!'

But of course, though Mr. Leslie Stephen, like the wise man he is, occasionally hits his idol over the costard with a club just to preserve

his own independence, he is and frankly owns himself to be a bookish man from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot. He even confesses he loves the country best in books; but then it must be in real country-books and not in descriptive poetry, which, says he with Johnsonian calmness, is for the most part 'intolerably dull.'

There is no better living representative of the great clan of sensible men and women who delight in reading for the pleasure it gives them than Mr. Stephen. If he is only pleased, it is quite shocking what he will put up with, and even loudly commend.

'We are indeed told dogmatically that a novelist should never indulge in little asides to a reader. Why not? . . . I like to read about Tom Jones or Colonel Newcome; but I

am also very glad when Fielding or Thackeray puts his puppets aside for the moment and talks to me in his own person. A child, it is true, dislikes to have the illusion broken, and is angry if you try to persuade him that Giant Despair was not a real personage like his favourite Blunderbore. But the attempt to produce such illusions is really unworthy of work intended for full-grown readers.'

Puppets indeed! It is evil and wicked treason against our Sovereign Lady, the Art we serve, to talk of puppets. The characters of our living Novelists live and move and have an independent being all their very own. They are clothed in flesh and blood. They talk and jostle one another. Where, we breathlessly inquire, do they do all or any of these fine things? Is it in the printed

page? Alas! no. It is only in the minds of their Authors, whither we cannot follow them even if we would.

Mr. Stephen has great enthusiasm, which ought to reconcile us to his discriminating judgment and occasional easterly blast. Nobody loves a good book better than he. Whether his subject be Nathaniel Hawthorne or Daniel De Foe, it is handled cunningly, as by a man who knows. But his highest praise is his unbought verdict. He is his own man. He is dominated by no prevailing taste or fashion. Even his affection does not bias him. He yields to none in his admiration for the 'good Sir Walter,' yet he writes:

'It is a question perhaps whether the firmer parts of Scott's reputation will be sufficiently coherent to resist after the removal of the rubbish.'

'Rubbish.' It is a harsh word, and

might well make Dean Stanley and a bygone generation of worshippers and believers in the plenary inspiration of Scott stir uneasily in their graves. It grates upon my own ear. But if it is a true word, what then? Why even then it does not matter very much, for when Time, that old ravager, has done his very worst, there will be enough left of Sir Walter to carry down his name and fame to the remotest age. He cannot be ejected from his native land. Loch Katrine and Loch Leven are not exposed to criticism, and they will pull Sir Walter through.

Mr. Stephen has another recommendation. Every now and again he goes hopelessly wrong. This is most endearing. Must I give instances? If I must I will, but without further note or comment. He is wrong in his depreciation of 'Wuthering Heights,' and wrong, amazingly

wrong, in his unaccountable partiality for 'Henrietta Temple.'

The author of 'Hours in a Library' belongs, it is hardly necessary to say, to the class of writers who use their steam for the purpose of going straight ahead. He is always greatly concerned with his subject. If he is out fox-hunting, he comes home with the brush, and not with a spray of blackberries; but if, on the other hand, he goes out blackberrying, he will return deeply dyed the true tint, and not dragging behind him a languishing coil of seaweed. Metaphors will, I know, ultimately be my ruin, but in the meantime I hope I make myself reasonably plain. In this honest characteristic Mr. Leslie Stephen resembles his distinguished brother, Sir James Stephen, who, in his admirable 'Horæ Sabbaticæ' (Macmillan, 3 vols.), may be discovered at any time tearing authors into

little bits and stripping them of their fringe, and then presenting to you, in a few masterly pages, the marrow of their arguments and the pith of their position.

Much genuine merriment is, however, almost always to be extracted from writers of this kind. Mr. Leslie Stephen's humour, none the worse for belonging to the sardonic species, is seldom absent from a page. It would be both pleasant and easy to collect a number of his epigrams, witty sayings, and humorous terms —but it is better to leave then where they are. The judicious will find them for themselves for many a long day to come. The sensible and truthful writers are the longest livers.

AMERICANISMS AND BRITICISMS.

MESSRS. HARPER BROS., of New York, have lately printed and published, and Mr. Brander Matthews has written, the prettiest possible little book, called 'Americanisms and Briticisms, with other Essays on other Isms.' To slip it into your pocket when first you see it is an almost irresistible impulse, and yet—would you believe it?—this pretty little book is in reality a bomb, intended to go off and damage British authors by preventing them from being so much as quoted in the States. Mr. Brander Matthews, however, is so obviously a good-natured man, and

his little fit of the spleen is so evidently of a passing character, that it is really not otherwise than agreeable to handle his bombshell gently and to inquire how it could possibly come about that the children of one family should ever be invited to fall out and strive and fight over their little books and papers.

It is easy to accede something to Mr. Matthews. Englishmen are often provoking, and not infrequently insolent. The airs they give themselves are ridiculous, but nobody really minds them in these moods; and, *per contra*, Americans are not easily laughed out of a good conceit of themselves, and have been known to be as disagreeable as they could.

To try to make 'an international affair' over the 'u' in honour and the second 'l' in traveller is surely a task beneath the dignity of anyone

who does not live by penning paragraphs for the evening papers, yet this is very much what Mr. Matthews attempts to do in this pleasingly-bound little volume. It is rank McKinleyism from one end to the other. 'Every nation,' says he, 'ought to be able to supply its own second-rate books, and to borrow from abroad only the best the foreigner has to offer it.' What invidious distinctions! Who is to prepare the classification? I don't understand this Tariff at all. If anything of the kind were true, which it is not, I should have said it was just the other way, and that a nation, if it really were one, would best foster its traditions and maintain its vitality by consuming its own first-rate books—its Shakespeares and Bacons, its Taylors and Miltons, its Drydens and Gibbons, its Wordsworths and

Tennysons — whilst it might very well be glad to vary the scene a little by borrowing from abroad less vitalizing but none the less agreeable wares.

But the whole notion is preposterous. In Fish and Potatoes a ring is possible, but hardly in Ideas. What is the good of being educated and laboriously acquiring foreign tongues and lingoes—getting to know, for instance, what a 'freight' train is and what a bobolink—if I am to be prevented by a diseased patriotism from reading whatever I choose in any language I can? Mr. Matthews' wrath, or his seeming wrath—for it is impossible to suppose that he is really angry — grows redder as he proceeds. 'It cannot,' he exclaims, 'be said too often or too emphatically that the British are foreigners, and their ideals in life, in literature, in politics, in taste, in art' (why not

add 'in victuals and drink?') 'are not our ideals.'

What rant this is! Mr. Matthews, however frequently and loudly he repeats himself, cannot unchain the canons of taste and compel them to be domiciled exclusively in America; nor can he hope to persuade the more intelligent of his countrymen to sail to the devil in an ark of their own sole construction. Artists all the world over are subject to the same laws. Nations, however big, are not the arbiters of good taste, though they may be excellent exemplars of bad. As for Mr. Matthews' determination to call Britons foreigners, that is his matter, but feelings of this kind, to do any harm, must be both reciprocal and general. The majority of reasonable Englishmen and Americans will, except when angry, feel it as hard to call one another foreigners, as John

Bright once declared he would find it hard to shout 'bastard' after the issue of a marriage between a man and his deceased wife's sister.

There is a portrait of Mr. Matthews at the beginning of this book or bomb of his, and he does not look in the least like a foreigner. I am sorry to disappoint him, but truth will out. The fact is that Mr. Matthews has no mind for reciprocity; he advises Cousin Sam to have nothing to do with John Bull's second-rate performances, but he feels a very pardonable pride in the fact that John Bull more and more reads his cousin's short stories and other things of the kind.

He gives a countrywoman of his, Miss Agnes Repplier, quite a scolding for quoting in a little book of hers no less than fifteen British authors of very varying degrees of merit. Why, in the name of

common-sense, should she not if they serve her turn? Was a more ludicrous passage than the following ever penned? It follows immediately after the enumeration of the fifteen authors just referred to:

'But there is nothing from Lowell, than whom a more quotable writer never lived. In like manner, we find Miss Repplier discussing the novels and characters of Miss Austen and of Scott, of Dickens, of Thackeray, and of George Eliot, but never once referring to the novels or characters of Hawthorne. Just how it was possible for any clever American woman to write nine essays in criticism, rich in references and quotations, without once happening on Lowell or on Hawthorne, is to me inexplicable.'

O Patriotism! what follies are committed in thy name!

The fact is, it is a weak point in certain American writers of 'the patriotic school' to be for ever dragging in and puffing the native article, just because it is native and for no other reason whatever; as if it mattered an atom whether an author whom, whilst you are discussing literature, you find it convenient to quote was born in Boston, Lincoln, or Boston, Massachusetts. One wearies of it indescribably. It is always Professor This or Colonel That. If you want to quote, quote and let your reader judge your samples; but do not worry him into rudeness by clawing and scraping.

Here we all are, Heaven knows how many million of us, speaking, writing and spelling the English language more or less ungrammatically in a world as full as it can hold of sorrows and cares, and fustian and folly. Literature is a

solace and a charm. I will not stop for a moment in my headlong course to compare it with tobacco; though if it ever came to the vote, mine would be cast for letters. Men and women have been born in America, as in Great Britain and Ireland, who have written books, poems, and songs which have lightened sorrow, eased pain, made childhood fascinating, middle-age endurable, and old age comfortable. They will go on being born and doing this in both places. What reader cares a snap of his finger where the man was cradled who makes him for awhile forget himself. Nationality indeed! It is not a question of Puffendorf or Grotius or Wheaton, even in the American edition with Mr. Dana's notes, but of enjoyment, of happiness, out of which we do not intend to be fleeced. Let us throw all our books into

hotch-pot. Who cares about spelling? Milton spelt 'dog' with two g's. The American Milton, when he comes, may spell it with three, while all the world wonders, if he is so minded.

But we are already in hotch-pot. Cooper and Irving, Longfellow, Bryant and Poe, Hawthorne, Lowell, and Whitman, and living writers by the score from the other side of the sea, are indistinguishably mixed with our own books and authors. The boundaries are hopelessly confused, and it is far too late for Mr. Brander Matthews to come upon the scene with chalk and tape, and try to mark us off into rival camps.

There is some girding and gibing, of course. Authors and critics cannot help nagging at one another. Some affect the grand air, 'assume the god,' and attempt to distinguish, as Mr. Matthews himself does in

this little book of his, 'between the authors who are not to be taken seriously, between the man of letters who is somebody and the scribbler who is merely, in the French phrase, *quelconque*, nobody in particular.' Others, again, though leading quiet, decent lives, pass themselves off in literature as swaggering Bohemians, cut-and-thrust men. When these meet there must be blows—pen-and-ink blows, as bloodless as a French duel. All the time the stream of events flows gigantically along. But to the end of all things Man will require to be interested, to be taken out of himself, to be amused; and that interest, that zest, that amusement, he will find where he can—at home or abroad, with alien friends or alien enemies: what cares he?

AUTHORS AND CRITICS.

AT the gracious Christmas season of the year we are reminded by nearly every post of our duty towards our neighbours, meaning thereby not merely those who live within what Wordsworth, with greater familiarity than precision, has defined as 'an easy walk,' but, with few exceptions, mainly of a party character, all mankind. The once wide boundaries of an Englishman's sphere of hatred are sorely circumscribed. We are now expected not only to love all peoples, which in theory is easy enough, particularly if we are no great travellers, but to read their publications in translations

unverified by affidavit, which in practice is very hard. Yet if we do not do it, we are Chauvinists, which has a horrid sound.

Much is now expected of a man. Even in his leisure hours, when his feet are on the hob, he must be zealous in some cause, say Realism; serious, as he reflects upon the interests of literature and the position of authors; and, above all and hardest of all, he must be sympathetic. Irony he should eschew, and levity, but disquisitions on duty are never out of place.

This disposition of mind, however praiseworthy, makes the aspect of things heavy, and yet this is the very moment selected by certain novelists, playwrights, and irresponsible persons of that kind, to whom we have been long accustomed to look for relaxation, to begin prating, not of their duty to please us, but of our

duty to appreciate them. It appears that we owe a duty to our contemporaries who write, which is not merely passive, that is, to abstain from slandering them, but active, namely, to read and admire them.

The authors who grumble and explain the merits of their own things are not the denizens of Grub Street, or those poor neglected souls to one of whom Mr. Alfred Austin lately addressed these consolatory words:

> 'Friend, be not fretful if the voice of fame,
> Along the narrow way of hurrying men,
> Where unto echo echo shouts again,
> Be all day long not noisy with your name.'

No; it is the shouted authors who are most discontented; the men who have best availed themselves of all the resources of civilization, who belong to syndicates, employ agents, have a price-current, and know what it is to be paid half a dozen times over for the same thing. Even the

prospect of American copyright and taxing all the intelligence of a reading Republic—even this does not satisfy them. They want to be classics in their own lifetime, and to be spoken and written of as if they were already embalmed in the memory of a grateful nation. To speak or write lightly of departed genius is offensive, but people who have the luck to be alive must not expect to be taken quite so seriously. But they do. Everything is taken seriously in these grim days, even short stories. There is said to be a demand for short stories, begotten, amongst many other things, by that reckless parent, the Spirit of the Age. There is no such demand. The one and only demand poor wearied humanity has ever made, or will ever make, of the story-teller, be he as long-winded as Richardson or as breathless as Kipling, is to be

made self-forgetful for a season. Interest me somehow, anyhow; make me mindless of the room I am sitting in, of the people about me; soothe me, excite me, tickle me, make me better, make me worse; do what you like with me, only make it possible for me to keep reading on, and a joy to do so. This is our demand. There is nothing unreasonable in it. It is matter of experience. Authors have done all this for us, and are doing it to-day. It is their trade, and a glorious one.

But the only thing that concerns the reader is the book he holds in his hand. He cannot derive inspiration from any other quarter. To the author the characters may be living, he may have lived amongst them for months; they may be inexpressibly dear to him, and his fine eyes may fill with tears as he thinks of Jane or Sarah, but this avails

naught to the reader. Our authors are too apt to forget this, and to tell us what they think of their own figments, and how they came to write their books. The imitation of Carlyle cannot be generally recommended, but in one respect, at all events, his example should be followed. Though he made fuss enough whilst he was writing a book, as soon as he had done with it he never mentioned it again.

This sudden display of nervousness on the part of authors is perhaps partly due to their unreasonable confusion of the Reviewers with the Readers. The great mass of criticism is delivered *vivâ voce*, and never appears in print at all. This spoken criticism is of far greater importance than printed criticism. It is repeated again and again, in all sorts of places, on hundreds of occasions, and cannot fail to make dints in

people's minds, whereas the current printed criticism of the week runs lightly off the surface. 'Press notices,' as they are called, have no longer 'boodle' in them, if I may use a word the genius of Mr. Stevenson has already consecrated for all delightful use. The pen may, in peaceful times, be mightier than the sword, but in this matter of criticism of our contemporaries the tongue is mightier than the pen. Authors should remember this.

The volume of unprinted criticism is immense, and its force amazing. Lunching last year at a chophouse, I was startled to hear a really important oath emerge from the lips of a clerkly-looking man who sat opposite me, and before whom the hurried waiter had placed a chump-chop. 'Take the thing away,' cried the man with the oath aforesaid, 'and bring me a loin-chop.' Then, observ

ing the surprise I could not conceal that an occurrence so trifling should have evoked an expression so forcible, the man muttered half to himself and half to me: 'There is nothing I hate so much in the wide world as a chump-chop, unless indeed it be' (speaking slowly and thoughtfully) 'the poetry of Mr. ——,' and here the fellow, unabashed, named right out the name of a living poet who, in the horrid phrase of the second-hand booksellers, is 'much esteemed' by himself and some others. After this explosion of feeling the conversation between us became frankly literary, but I contrived to learn in the course of it that this chump-chop-hater was a clerk in an insurance office, and had never printed a line in his life. He was, as sufficiently appears, a whimsical fellow, full of strange oaths and stranger prejudice, but for criticism of contemporary

authors—keen, searching, detached, genuine—it would be impossible to find his equal in the Press. The man is living yet—he was lately seen in Cheapside, elbowing his way through the crowd with a masterful air, and so long as he lives he criticises, and what is more, permeates his circle—for he must live somewhere—with his opinions. These are your gods, O Authors! It is these voices which swell the real chorus of praise or blame. These judges are untainted by hatreds, strangers to jealousy; your vanity, your egotism, your necktie, your anecdotes, do not prevent *them* from enjoying your books or revelling in your humour, be it new or old, for they do not know you by sight; but neither will the praise of the *Athenæum*, or of any newspaper, or the conventional respect of other authors save your productions, your poem, your

novel, your drama, your collected trifles, from the shafts of their ridicule or the dust of their indifference.

But do we owe any duty to contemporary authors? Clearly we are at liberty to talk about them and their 'work' as much as ever we choose—at dinner-tables, in libraries and smoking-rooms, in railway carriages (if we like shouting and do not mind being inaudible), in boats, at balls, in Courts of Justice, and other places, *ejusdem generis*, at Congresses (before, during, and after the speeches), and, indeed, everywhere and at all times, if we are so disposed and can find anybody to listen, or even to seem to listen, to us. Of this liberty we can never be deprived even by a veto of authors *ad hoc*, and, as already stated, the free exercise of it is a far more important constituent in the manufacture of literary opinion than printed notices of books.

But though we are just as much entitled to express in conversation our delight in, or abhorrence of, a contemporary author as we are to bless or curse the weather, it cannot be said to be our duty to do so. No adult stands in a fiduciary relationship to another adult in the matter of his reading. If we like a book very much, it is only natural to say so; but if we do not like it, we may say so or hold our tongues as we choose.

Suppose one dreamt (gentle reader, remember this is nothing but a dream) that there was one woebegone creature alive at this moment in this Britain of ours who cordially disliked, and shrank from, the poetry of Sir Edwin Arnold, Mr. Lewis Morris, and Mr. Alfred Austin, who could not away with 'Robert Elsmere,' 'The Wages of Sin,' or 'Donovan,' who abhorred the writings of Mrs. Lynn Linton, Archdeacon

Farrar, and Mr. Shorthouse, who hated 'Amiel's Journal,' 'Marie Bashkirtseff,' and 'Little Lord Fauntleroy,' who found it easy, and even helpful, to live for six months at a time without reading a new novel by Mr. Hall Caine or Mr. Black, who failed to respond to the careful and often-repeated raptures of those wise critics who assured him that the author of 'Amos Barton' and 'Middlemarch' cowers and crouches by the side of Mr. Hardy and Mr. Meredith; who, when he wants to laugh very heartily indeed, does not take down the works of—— But my list is long enough for a dream—could you honestly advise that man to run amuck in print against all these powerful and delightful writers? What good could come of it? The good people who like a writer will not like him or her any the less because you don't. Reading is a

democratic pursuit, else why are children taught it—very badly, no doubt—out of the rates? Sensible men and foolish men alike resent being dictated to about their contemporaries. They are willing to learn about the dead, but they crave leave to lay their own hands upon the living.

'Who set you up as a judge over us?' they cry testily, when they are told by a perfect stranger that they ought not to like what they do like, and ought to like what they go to sleep over.

Schopenhauer, a man who hated much, in his 'Parerga,' fervently desires a literary journal which 'should be a dam against the unconscionable scribbling of the age, the everlasting deluge of bad and useless books.'

He proceeds (I am quoting from Mr. Saunders' translation):

'If there were such a paper as I mean, every bad writer, every brainless compiler, every plagiarist from others' books, every hollow and incapable place-hunter, every sham philosopher, every vain and languishing poetaster, would shudder at the prospect of the pillory in which his bad work would inevitably have to stand soon after publication.'

It is an animated passage, and reeks of the shambles. How awkward for poor so-and-so! one murmurs whilst reading. But even were the thing possible, I demur to the ferocity. There is no need to be so angry. A dishonest and lazy plumber does more harm in a week than all the poetasters of the Christian era. But the thing is not possible, as the robust sense of Schopenhauer made plain to him. He goes on:

'The ideal journal could, to be sure, be written only by people who

joined incorruptible honesty with rare knowledge and still rarer power of judgment, so that, perhaps, there could, at the very most, be one, *and even hardly one*, in the whole country; but there it would stand, like a just Areopagus, every member of which would have to be elected by all the others.'

Who, I wonder, would elect the first member of this just Ruin? He would, I suppose, be nominated by the subscribers of the necessary capital, and would then proceed to gather round him, were his terms better than his quarters, the gang we all know so well, incorruptible as Robespierre, not quite so learned as Selden, and with powers of judgment which can only be described as varying.

It is of course obvious that no journal, be its contributors who they may, can exercise criminal jurisdic-

tion over bad or stupid authors. The hue and cry has before now been raised at the heels of a popular author, but always to the great enrichment of the rascal. The reading community owes no allegiance, and pays no obedience, to the critical journals, who, if they really want to injure an author, and deprive him of his little meed of contemporary praise and profit, should leave him severely alone. To refer to him is to advertise him.

The principles of taste, the art of criticism, are not acquired amidst the hurly-burly of living authors and the hasty judgments thereupon of hasty critics, but by the study, careful and reverential, of the immortal dead. In this study the critics are of immense use to us. Dryden, Addison, Gray, Coleridge, Lamb, Hazlitt, Bagehot, Swinburne, reveal to us their highest critical powers not

whilst vivisecting a contemporary, but when expounding the anatomy of departed greatness.

Teach me rightly to admire Milton and Keats, and I will find my own criticism of living poets. Help me to enjoy, however feebly, Homer and Dante, and I will promise not to lose my head over Pollok's 'Course of Time,' or Mr. Bailey's 'Festus.' Fire my enthusiasm for Henry Vaughan and George Herbert, and I shall be able to distinguish between the muses of Miss Frances Ridley Havergal and of Miss Christina Rossetti. Train me to become a citizen of the true Republic of Letters, and I shall not be found on my knees before false gods, or trooping with the vulgar to crown with laurel brazen brows.

In conclusion, one may say that though authors cannot be expected to love their critics, they might do

well to remember that it is not the critics who print, but the reading community whose judgments determine an author's place amongst contemporary writers. It may be annoying to be sneered at by an anonymous critic in the *Saturday Review*, but it is quite as bad to be sneered at by a stranger in a railway carriage. The printed sneer may be read by more people than overheard the spoken sneer; but printed sneers are not easily transferred from writer to reader in their original malice. One may enjoy a sneer without sneering.

Authors may also advantageously remember that we live in hurried times, and enjoy scanty leisure for reading, and that of necessity the greater fraction of that leisure belongs to the dead. Merely a nodding acquaintance with Shakespeare is not maintained without a considerable expenditure of time.

The volumes with which every man of ordinary literary taste would wish to be familiar can only be numbered by thousands. We must therefore be allowed time, and there is always plenty. Every good poem, novel, play, at once joins and becomes part and parcel of the permanent stock of English literature, and some time or another will be read and criticised. It is quite safe. Every author of spirit repudiates with lofty scorn the notion that he writes in obedience to any mandate from the public. It is the wretched, degraded politician whose talk is of mandates; authors know nothing of mandates, they have missions. But if so, they must be content to bide their time. If a town does turn out to meet a missionary, it is usually not with loud applause, but with large stones.

As for the critics, the majority of them no doubt only do what they

are told. It is a thousand pities the habit of reviewing so many new books in the literary papers has become general. It is a trade thing. Were a literary paper to have no advertising columns, do you suppose it would review half the new books it does? Certainly not. It gets the books, and it gets the advertisements, and then it does the best it can for itself and its readers by distributing the former amongst its contributors with the request that they will make as lively 'copy' as they can out of the materials thus provided them. The reviews are written and printed; then begins the wail of the author: My reviewer, says he, has not done me justice; his object appears to have been, not to show me off, but himself. There is no sober exposition of *my* plan, *my* purpose, *my* book, but only a parade of the reviewer's own reading and a crack-

ling of his thorns under my pot. The author's complaint is usually just, but he should remember that in nine cases out of ten his book calls for no review, and certainly would receive none on its merits. The review is not written for those who have read or intend to read the book, but for a crowd of people who do not mean to read it, but who want to be amused or interested by a so-called review of it, which must therefore be an independent, substantive literary production.

What a mercy it would be if the critical journals felt themselves free to choose their own subjects, new and old, and recognised that it was their duty to help to form the taste of their readers, and not merely to pick their provender for them or to promote the prosperity of publishers, which, as a matter of fact, they can no longer do.

The critics who criticise in print, were they left to themselves, would be found praising enthusiastically all they found praiseworthy in contemporary effort. Even now, when their tempers must be sorely tried by the dreary wilderness in which they are compelled to sojourn, it is marvellous how quick they are to snuff the fresh, blowing airs of genuine talent. It is slander to say that present-day critics are grudging of praise. They are far too free with it. Had they less hack-work, they might by chance become a little more fastidious; but even if this were so, it would only increase their joy, delight, and satisfaction in making the discovery that somebody or another—some Stevenson, some Barrie, some Kipling—had actually written something which was not only in form but in fact a new book.

Fiery souls there would no doubt

always be who would insist, on occasions, in rushing out to strike the shield of some many-editioned living author, and defy him to mortal combat. An occasional fray of the kind is always an agreeable incident, but a wise editor would do his best to control the noble rage of his contributors, bidding them remember the words of John Keats: 'The sure way, Bailey, is first to know a man's faults, and then be passive.'

The time and space liberated by giving up the so-called criticism of bad and insignificant books could be devoted to the real criticism of the few living and the many dead classics; and, for one does occasionally get a little weary of the grand style, with arguments and discussions about smaller folk. If basting there must be, let it be the basting of the brainless compilers, the plagiarists, the sham philosophers, and the languish-

ing poetasters of the past. Dead donkeys are far more amusing than living ones, and make much better texts for fierce critics than men with wives and families dependent upon them. The vagaries of great authors have often done harm in their generation; the follies of small ones, including the supreme and most visible of all their follies, that of thinking themselves great, have never harmed a human creature.

THE END.

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